



Tullamore Student Works To Overturn Miscarriage Of Justice

TULLAMORE native Aoife Masterson, a student at Griffith College, Dublin is one of five law students from Ireland who have secured internships in a landmark campaign to overturn miscarriages of justice with the Innocence Project (<http://www.innocenceproject.org/>) in the US.

The Innocence Project founded in the US in 1992 by Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld is a national litigation and public policy organisation in the US. The five students from Ireland - three from Griffith College and two from Trinity College - will work as interns with the Innocence Project on cases in Arizona, New York, Idaho and Ohio.

In Ireland the Innocence Project was pioneered by the law faculty at leading third level education institution, Griffith College, Dublin (www.gcd.ie), where Dean David Langwallner established the Irish project in 2009. The Innocence Project has already exonerated 307 people in the United States and has 20 active files in Ireland. Some of the investigative work of



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the project has led to a case coming back before the Irish High Court, assistance in an international case and a request for a pardon from the Minister for Justice. The experience gained by the Griffith College students in the US will be invaluable to the Innocence Project Ireland activity as it works toward exoneration on some of its cases in Ireland.

The Innocence Project is dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted individuals through DNA testing and other types of cases including fabricated and concocted evi-

dence or ineffective assistance of counsel where the person is factually innocent and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. In Ohio, where one of the Irish students is going, since 2003 over 10 prisoners have been exonerated and there is a distinct possibility that one of the students will work on a case that earns exoneration. In recent years the Innocence Project has become increasingly internationalised and is now a worldwide human rights organisation.

Speaking about the initiative, David Langwallner, Dean of Law Faculty at Griffith College said:

'In a first for Ireland we have secured these internships for a group of talented legal students who will work on one of the most important aspects of the law - miscarriage of justice. The students will intern while in the US with many of the leading legal minds in that jurisdiction.'

'Many students take J1's for the summer and seek fun jobs during the summer break. However these students participating in the Innocence Project have chosen a different

route and are real ambassadors for the legal talent in Ireland. Their efforts have the potential to really alter the course of life for the victims of a miscarriage of justice.'

It should be noted that the project, as well as imparting a passion for justice and a human rights consciousness, imparts in students crucial clinical skills which they derive from a combination of interviewing witnesses, conducting prison visits, preparing reports and immersing themselves in real case files where they see how law operates in fact. Aoife Masterson, caseworker on the Irish Innocence Project indicated that: 'The Innocence Network addresses not only those issues of fundamental importance to the judicial system but also reflects a responsibility to assist others through our own studies. It is therefore something I am passionate about from a legal perspective but from a moral one also. The Irish Innocence Project has given me the opportunity to help provide a voice for those who might not ordinarily be afforded one having exhausted the appeals process.'