Clare County Library

MEDIA RELEASE

READY, STEADY, READ!

Clare County Library joins Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canadian Libraries and An Garda Síochana in transatlantic '*Reading Challenge*'

County Clare, IRELAND, Tuesday 9th January 2007 - Clare County Library has linked up with An Garda Síochana, Canadian Libraries, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and 21 of the county's National Schools to promote reading among children.

The transatlantic literacy programme, entitled '*The Reading Challenge*', aims to improve the reading skills of participating children and to teach them to work together towards a common goal by competing against other schools in a friendly and positive way. Mayor of Clare, Cllr. Flan Garvey will officially launch the project in DeValera Library, Ennis on Monday next 15th January. Children and teachers from participating schools along with members of An Garda Síochána will be present.

'*The Reading Challenge*' forms part of the '*Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program*', which was established ten years ago in northern New Brunswick by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The police act as the 'bridge' between the community and the library, and in return the library develops programs and activities that directly impact literacy amongst children. Currently, Adopt-a-Library involves 91 RCMP and policing agencies from across Canada, paired with 97 libraries. Clare County Library is the first library service outside of Canada to take part in the '*Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program.*'

"*Clare County Library has linked up with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Canada who are being assisted by seven members of An Garda Síochana in*

Clare", stated Patricia Fitzgerald, Assistant Librarian, Children's Services, Clare County Library.

She continued, "*It is the belief of the creator and supporters of the Adopt A Library Literacy Program that there is a relationship between youth illiteracy and crime. While there is no conclusive evidence to support this claim, the statistics seem to indicate a strong relationship between low literacy skills and increased levels of crime in later years; the higher the level of literacy, the lower the crime rate*."

Explaining how the Challenge works, Ms. Fitzgerald said, "*Gardaí and public library staff visit participating schools where they explain the importance and fun of reading to the children and encourage them to use their local library. Once a month, a designated teacher in each school counts the number of books read before registering the tally on 'The Reading Challenge' website www.fightingcrime.ca. At the end of the school year the school that has read the most books overall will receive €2100 worth of books, sponsored by Scholastic publishers, while Clare County Library is also awarding the school who reads the most in County Clare with €2000 worth of books. The Library offers free membership to all schools in Clare. This membership entitles the school to a loan of 30 books for one month. Books may be renewed or exchanged at any time during the month ensuring a fresh supply of books for all young readers. Individual children's membership is also free*."

The Reading Challenge began in late 2006 and has proven to be hugely successful. The participating National Schools are Tubber, Burrane, Clouna, Carrigaholt, Doonaha, Lackyle, Killaloe Boys National, Ennis Educate Together School, Coore, St. Senans N.S. Kilrush, Moy, Mullagh, Corofin, Flagmount, Crusheen, Newmarket on Fergus, Cratloe, Moyasta, Feakle, Doora and Inagh.

Commenting on Clare County Library's link-up with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, County Librarian Noel Crowley said, "*We are delighted to have been able to partake in such an important and unique program. The Reading Challenge is*

yet another important addition to Clare County Library's ever expanding range of children's services. I would like to thank An Garda Síochana, Canadian Libraries, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the participating primary schools for their ongoing co-operation. The Library Service looks forward to further developing the initiative in county Clare."

Further details on '*The Reading Challenge*' are available at www.fightingcrime.ca. For more on Clare County Library's Children's Services log on to www.clarelibrary.ie or email mailbox@clarelibrary.ie.

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Notes to Editor:

- Patricia Fitzgerald, Assistant Librarian, Children's Services, Clare County Library is available for **interview** and **further comment**. Please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy Public Relations on 086-8534900 or email media@dunphypr.com.
- Photo opportunities will be provided at an official launch in DeValera Library, Ennis at 1.30pm on Monday next 15th January.