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Ireland Prime Minister Bertie Ahern Receives Spirit of Ireland Award

San José and Dublin, Ireland Kick Off U.S. Portion of Sister City Program's 20th Anniversary

SAN JOSE, CALIF.—(March 17, 2006)—Bertie Ahern, Ireland's Prime Minister, received the 2006 Spirit of Ireland Award at the annual Spirit of Ireland Dinner, a gala black-tie dinner held Tuesday evening at the Fairmont Hotel in downtown San José. Ahern was honored for his accomplishments that have furthered and epitomized the relationship between San José/Silicon Valley and Ireland.

Ahern is a former Lord Mayor of Dublin. In 1986, while he was Lord Mayor, Ahern and former Mayor of San José, Tom McEnery, established the San José/Dublin, Ireland Sister City program. The program, known as "twinning" in Ireland, has thrived throughout its twenty-year existence serving to nurture cultural, economic, artistic, sporting, and educational ties between San José/Silicon Valley and Dublin.

During his remarks at the Spirit of Ireland Dinner, Ahern cited the shared entrepreneurial and innovative spirit on both sides of the Atlantic that has been key to both regions' successes. "The technology exchange has been a key factor in Ireland's economic development," Ahern said. "The emergence of an enterprise culture in Ireland demonstrates that one of the most significant spin-off benefits of overseas investment is its role in stimulating Irish entrepreneurs at home." Past recipients of the Spirit of Ireland Award have included Gordon Moore of Intel, John Lewis of Amdahl, Wim Roelandts of Xilinx, Nobel Peace Prize recipient John Hume and President Bill Clinton. The Award honors those individuals and/or organizations whose accomplishments have exemplified the relationship between San José/Silicon Valley and Ireland.

Event highlight of U.S. segment of celebration

The Spirit of Ireland Dinner was part of the 20th anniversary of the sister city designation between San José, California, and Dublin, Ireland. Held in conjunction with the city's annual Irish Week celebration, the U.S. portion of the anniversary included a week of San José hosting a Dublin delegation at a variety of cultural, economic, artistic, sporting, and educational events.

The Dublin delegation, one of the largest to visit San José, included Dublin Lord Mayor Catherine Byrne; Dublin Chamber of Commerce President Eugene McCague; Dublin Attorney John Menton;

Dublin Council members Anne Carter and Maurice Ahern; Dublin City Manager John Fitzgerald; Chairman San José/Dublin Sister City Committee Kevin Dowling; Dublin Chamber of Commerce CEO Gina Quinn; Eoin O'Neill from Trinity College; Dublin Tourism Chief Executive Officer Frank Magee and Dublin Tourism Chairman Michael Flood.

Events throughout the week included tours of IBM Silicon Valley Labs, eBay, the San José BioCenter and San José City Hall. Other events included a welcome reception hosted by Ray O'Flaherty, owner of O'Flaherty's Pub; a luncheon—sponsored by the San José/Dublin Sister City Program—at Clos La Chance Winery; a concert performance with the Dublin Youth Symphony Orchestra performing along with the San Jose Youth Symphony Philharmonic Orchestra; an Irish Mass and reception at St. Joseph's Church in Mountain View; a boxing match featuring Ireland vs. California Olympic Style Boxing, presented by the San José Sports Authority and the Irish Week Committee and a San José Sharks game.

The 20th anniversary celebration of the San José /Dublin sister city relationship continues in September in Ireland when a delegation from San José will visit Dublin. For more information, please visit, www.sanjosedublin.org.

About the City of San José's Office of Economic Development

The City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development (OED) is committed to a vital, competitive San Jose economy that increases prosperity for people and companies and enhances City revenues. The Office guides the City's economic strategy, provides assistance for business success, helps connect employers with trained workers, and provides art and cultural resources to our community. For more information, please visit, www.sjeconomy.com.

About the City of San José

From its founding in 1777 as California's first city, San Jose has been a leader, driven by its spirit of innovation. Today, San Jose stands as the largest city in Northern California and the Capital of Silicon Valley—the world's leading center of innovation. The city, the 10th largest in the U.S., is committed to remaining a top-ranked place to do business, to work and to live. For more information, visit, www.sanjoseca.gov.

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