**Sociology and Law student selected for the Washington Ireland Program 2017-18**

Kathleen Lawrence is a final year student in Sociology and Law at Maynooth University. She works part-time in Pavee Point as a community health worker, where she is part of a Primary Health Care Team. Kathleen has represented Pavee Point at conferences across Europe and in March 2016 she presented at the MU International Women’s Day event, *Gender, Diversity and Leadership*.

Kathleen learned about the Washington Ireland program in November 2016: “I thought it looked interesting. They were specifically looking for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. They want to challenge you to become leaders and introduce you to different times of people.”

The application process was rigorous involving competencies testing, group interview and personal interview: “I knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to go to America, to be selected for a prestigious program (Minister Leo Varadkar is an alumnus) and to have an opportunity to work with other young leaders from the North and the South,” says Kathleen.

Kathleen found the final personal interview refreshingly frank: “They were looking for leadership potential but also for some self-reflection and the capacity to recognise instances when you acted poorly and could have done things better. It was a bit disconcerting to be asked straight out in the interview-‘when were you a jerk?!’”

Kathleen will spend eight weeks in the US, and stay with a host family during that period. She has been awarded a scholarship which will cover her expenses for the duration of the program.

“I am excited about the change to broaden my horizons, challenge my views and develop my leadership potential” says Kathleen, who is already thinking of pursuing graduate studies in September 2017.

The Washington Ireland Program (WIP) selects 30 talented students each year to complete a year-long program of service and leadership. The selected students spend a six-week Summer Semester in Washington, DC and New York City where their leadership skills are developed through a program of personal development, policy debate and community service.  The aim of WIP is to support leaders committed to building a future of peace and prosperity for Northern Ireland and Ireland. For more information see: <http://wiprogram.org/>