

PRESS RELEASE

European young social entrepreneurs gather in Amsterdam

Ashoka and Staples Foundation for Learning present the first European Youth Gathering

Amsterdam, November 13, 2009 – Ashoka and Staples Foundation for Learning (SFFL), which is the charitable arm of Staples, Inc., will host the first European Youth Venture Gathering in Amsterdam on November 13-15, 2009. This is an event bringing together thirty remarkable young *changemakers* from five different countries in Europe who are leading their own ventures to drive positive change in their community. The gathering will be held in the Staples Europe headquarters in Amsterdam.

Ashoka, a global association of social entrepreneurs, has launched Youth Venture in the Netherlands in order to support Dutch youth in becoming *changemakers*: people who are civically engaged in an entrepreneurial way. Support from Staples, the world's largest office products company, has enabled Ashoka to bring Youth Venture to eight countries in Europe, South America and North America.

First European Youth Venture Gathering in Amsterdam

Today's gathering of young changemakers from across Europe will help Amsterdam become a hub for European-wide social entrepreneurship. During the gathering, the young entrepreneurs will leverage each others' expertise and the expertise of the top Staples executives in order to expand their ventures and build a Europe-wide youth changemaker network.

One of the social ventures is APAID (Adapted Physical Activity International Development), an organization led by Steffi de Jong (24) that allows her to combine her knowledge of adaptive sports with people in developing countries who have to live with a disability. APAID helps existing local companies and aid workers to promote integration of these disabled people back into society. In addition, APAID performs research as to the effects of this approach, in cooperation with renowned universities such as Stanford University. Steffi: "I have completed a study in adaptive sports and not in business, which is important for an entrepreneur. Ashoka's Youth Venture organizes the European Youth Gatherings where we are trained in the business side of entrepreneurship. We can for instance attend a workshop Marketing for NGOs, we are teamed up with experts and have brainstorming sessions on how we can realize international growth."

With their venture Walk the Talk, David Hill (21) and Veerle Vrindts (22) will organize courses on practical lifestyle changes against global warming, aimed at university students. They also plan to run workshops on advocacy and lobbying as well as host discussions on topics such as the benefits and challenges of vegetarianism and the implications of global warming. "With Walk the Talk, we can build a bridge between the top level discussions about climate change and a practical sustainable approach we all can implement in our daily lives", says Veerle.

Social and corporate partnerships in the Netherlands

Ashoka and SFFL aim to support thousands of Dutch youth to realize their dreams for social change and in the process become *changemakers*. Youth Venture offers organisational support, workshops, personal coaching, seed funding and a network of likeminded young changemakers spanning 17 countries. In the Netherlands, Ashoka is collaborating with key actors of the youth sector to form a core group of Dutch partners: leading youth organizations, schools and corporate partners to collaborate in inspiring and supporting talented youth to become *changemakers*. Dutch youth in Amsterdam and Maastricht have already begun to design their own ventures for social change.

Social issues addressed by growing number of *changemakers*

In partnership with SFFL, Ashoka has launched 3,500 youth teams involving over 70,000 youth volunteers throughout the world with the transformative experience of taking initiative and making a difference in their communities. The ventures address all types of social issues, including poverty, health, the elderly, the environment, education, diversity issues and the arts. Ashoka and SFFL believe that if there are many more changemakers in the Netherlands and in the world, then all of society will benefit from the new ideas to solve problems, the entrepreneurial talent, and the greater empathy and care for others.

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About Ashoka

Ashoka is the world's community of leading social entrepreneurs—individuals with innovative and practical ideas for addressing social needs. Since its founding in 1981, Ashoka has launched more than 2,000 leading social entrepreneurs serving over 60 countries. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of innovators who work collectively to transform society and design new ways for the social sector to become more productive, entrepreneurial and globally integrated. For more information, please visit www.ashoka.org.

About Ashoka's Youth Venture

Ashoka's Youth Venture aims to help an entire generation of young people develop as leaders who will improve their communities now and throughout their lives. Youth Venture inspires and supports teams of young people to launch and lead their own civic-minded organisations and businesses. Youth teams access workshops, tools, adult allies, a global network of like-minded young changemakers, and seed funding to establish their own ventures that solve problems around them. We believe that the greatest contribution we can make to the world is to increase dramatically the number of changemakers today and in every future generation. This is the key factor for success for every part of society, from a school to a company to an entire country. Youth Venture operates in 17 countries and online at www.GenV.net.

About Staples Foundation for Learning

The mission of Staples Foundation for Learning, Inc. is to teach, train and inspire. Founded in 2002, the foundation has contributed more than (USD) \$17 million dollars to national and local charities that provide educational opportunities and job skills for all people, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged youth. Staples Foundation for Learning has also developed lasting relationships with Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Earth Force, Hispanic Heritage Foundation and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. In addition, Staples Foundation for Learning supports Ashoka in nine countries: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and the United States. For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, please visit www.staplesfoundation.org.

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