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Swiss Roots Website Enhances Swiss-U.S. Ties

Washington, March 30, 2006 –**swiss roots**, a unique initiative to bring Switzerland and the United States even closer together, launched the centerpiece of its program yesterday, the much anticipated website www.swissroots.org. The website will be the birthplace of an innovative new internet community, featuring two main platforms: an interactive meeting space that enables visitors to share in their Swiss affinity and a genealogical search engine whereby the over one million Americans of Swiss descent can explore their ancestry and heritage.

“The **swiss roots** website is a unique and innovative tool for creating lasting connections between Swiss and American people,” said Christian Blickenstorfer, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States, who presented the **swiss roots** program to an audience of over 200 policymakers, media, and academics at the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, DC. “It is also a great resource for understanding how Swiss immigrants and Switzerland’s culture of innovation have made an impact in the U.S.”

U.S. Trade Representative and famous American with Swiss roots, Ambassador Rob Portman, was an honored guest at the website’s launch event. He reflected on how Swiss values enabled his ancestors to succeed in the United States. “Through their Swiss values of strong family ties, a good work ethic, and entrepreneurial spirit, [my ancestors] not only survived in the U.S, they thrived and gave back to their communities.”

In addition to highlighting the numerous accomplishments of Swiss-Americans like the Portman family, the website offers a number of other exciting features. The website’s interactive community function offers a sophisticated database that allows visitors not only to share their own stories, but to search and sort other visitors’ experiences and anecdotes. By creating “friends’ networks,” visitors can communicate and create lasting bonds across the Atlantic. This section also contains message boards, an interactive calendar of Swiss events, and access to thousands of reviews on Switzerland destinations.

The genealogical aspect of the website contains a wealth of information for Americans of Swiss descent to learn about their ancestors including where they came

from and what their lives were like. The site also includes a number of different immigration databases, including Ellis Island passenger lists. Links to the homepages of Swiss localities even enable visitors to plan a visit to their ancestral homes. Finally, there is interesting and surprising information on Switzerland, profiles and interviews of famous Swiss immigrants, and promotional offerings.

In addition to the state-of-the-art website, the **swiss roots** program aims to strengthen the bonds between the world's two oldest democracies through activities that foster dialogue, understanding, and exchanges. Exciting events throughout the U.S. will showcase the best in Swiss innovation, culture, history, education, and business including an Ellis Island exhibit on Swiss immigration to the U.S. and a road show featuring a vintage Swiss postal bus through the U.S. states with the highest concentration of Swiss immigrants. A full calendar of events is available on the website.

swiss roots is organized by the official Swiss representations in the U.S under the leadership of the Consulate General of Switzerland in New York and in cooperation with numerous local Swiss associations. **swiss roots** is supported by entities such as Swiss Helvetia Fund, Swiss International Airlines and Swiss Post and also by Switzerland-promotional agencies such as Presence Switzerland, Switzerland Tourism and Pro Helvetia. The **swiss roots** website was developed by IgoUgo, based in New York and Swissinfo, based in Switzerland.

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