

Global Village interview transcript – Irish Girl Guides interview

Interviewer: Dil Wickremasinghe from Newstalk's Global Village

Interviewees: Jenny Gannon, Emily Nangle, Ciara Egan

Date of Interview: 15/07/2017

Dil: Welcome back you're listening to Newstalk 106-108, do send us a text to 53106 at a cost of 30 cent or you can join the conversation by following us on Twitter @GlobalVillageNT.

Earlier this year, we spoke to Irish Girl Guides about their decision to welcome transgender girls. The organisation is about to host the biggest ever international Guide camp in Tipperary this summer and we're delighted to welcome Jenny Gannon, Camp Chief, and with her we also have Ciara Egan and Emily Nangle who are both Girl Guides. You are all very welcome to Global Village.

Jenny: Thank you very much.

Emily, Ciara: Thanks.

Dil: Now, Jenny, tell our listeners what the... all about the Girl Guides. What do you do?

Jenny: I suppose, we're an organisation where young women and girls can join from the age of 5... There is no end age really.

Dil: So I can join now?

Jenny: Absolutely.

Dil: Right, okay.

Jenny: A place for everybody. And I suppose our younger, our smallies, our little girls from 5 to 7 can be Ladybirds, and then they move on to Brownies and into Guides, and then become like, Emily's a Senior Brancher. And then,

Dil: Yee-haw! It's like you're herding cattle or something!

Jenny: And then you can become a leader. And I suppose the girls do everything from playing games to doing crafts to singing songs to learning about the world around them, there is a massive variety of tasks and activities that the girls do in the programme that they're involved in.

Dil: Let's talk about this big event that's happening this summer, it's like the biggest ever international Guide camp in Tipperary, are you ready for it?

Jenny: Yes, yes, we're almost there! Two weeks to go, or seventeen days I believe Facebook tells us today. So yeah we're pretty much ready to go, it's going to be very exciting, we're looking forward to having the girls on site now, this has kind of been well over two years in the planning and so it's great that we're almost there to see it all kind of come to fruition.

Dil: Mhmm.

So we're joined by two Girl Guides, who are, Ciara Egan, you're 13, and Emily Nangle, you're 18, so Ciara how did you get involved?

Ciara: My family's always done Girl Guides, so I was kinda pushed into it.

Dil: No choice in the matter whatsoever! No such thing as free will for you. So you joined when you were 5?

Ciara: Yep.

Dil: And looking back now, what do you think? Was it a good idea that your family pushed you into it?

Ciara: Definitely.

Dil: So you're not too mad at them.

Ciara: No.

Dil: And what about yourself, Emily, when did you join?

Emily: I joined when I was 5, I was pushed into it - like I wasn't pushed into it, my Mam and my Aunties were Guides as well, so.

Dil: That's what you say anyway.

So hang on, you're 18 now, and you joined when you were 5, that's like... 13 years!

Emily: Yeah.

Dil: My goodness, that's a long time to be a Girl Guide.

Emily: Yeah.

Dil: And how do you feel that has, I suppose, shaped you into who you are today?

Emily: It's definitely made me a lot confident, a lot more confident, and like it'll definitely get me out there in the world, so that's good.

Dil: So let's talk about day-to-day stuff, what does - 'cause I have never experienced being around the Girl Guides, or Boy Scouts, or anything like that, but I would love my kids to join, y'know, 'cause I think especially in this day and age we need to get kids out into nature, and all that. So tell me, what kinda stuff do you do, Ciara?

Ciara: We do crafts, we learn about other Guide units around the world, and we just sing songs and we do different things.

Dil: What's your favourite activity?

Ciara: Probably different camps we go on

Dil: Oh wow, like where?

Ciara: Like we went to Cape Clear Island in Cork last year for summer and that was really fun.

Dil: And would you like go camping, or would you stay,

Ciara: Sometimes.

Dil: Sometimes.

Ciara: Different. Hostels, camping...

Dil: Oh, I love camping.

Ciara: Yep.

Dil: I think Ireland is brilliant for camping, 'cause you don't have snakes, you don't have creepy crawlies here. Like if I wanted to go camping in Sri Lanka I'd be dead in 5 minutes, I'd be bitten by something, or, yeah, forget it.

And what about yourself, Emily, you're obviously older, so what kind of activities would your age group be involved in?

Emily: Well, for the past couple of years like I've been a Young Leader, so I'm helping run like different activities like crafts, and I've just planned my weekend for my Junior Camp Craft, so I'm stepping up to be a Leader, training for a Leader now.

Dil: Wow, and what does a Leader do?

Emily: They just make sure, like, they have stuff to do with the girls, and encourage them, and make sure they have fun.

Dil: And kinda mentor them?

Emily: Yeah.

Dil: And I think this makes so much sense, 'cause you said it has given you huge confidence. For 18, to not only be able to look after yourself, but you are now going to be looking after a whole bunch of other girls.

Emily: Yeah.

Dil: Does that scare you a little bit even, no?

Emily: A little bit, but I'll get there.

Dil: And what's the dream, when you guys, y'know when you go out into the world, what do you want to do? Have you ever thought, have you thought of it yet, or do you just want to leave it unravel on its own then?

Emily: I'll wait to see what happens, like.

Dil: Ok, ok, very good. And Ciara, what about yourself, any thoughts? You don't want to work in media or something like that, no? You don't want my job? You can have my job, it's OK. Jenny, so, how long are you actually, how long are you in the Girl Guides?

Jenny: I started when I was a Brownie at 6 ...

Dil: We won't talk about years!

Jenny: And have been there since.

Dil: So quite a while.

Jenny: Quite a while. Yeah, and would have started as a Brownie and a Guide, and never kind of left, have kind of taken up different roles in the organisation, and different positions, you know, as I moved on through.

Dil: And what's kept you going? I'd say a lot of Girl Guides would probably leave after maybe Emily's age, because it's off to college, and stuff, but you've stuck on.

Jenny: Yeah, I did, when I went to college I was still living at home and coming up and down to Dublin, kind of to go to college, and I opened a unit of Ladybirds who are the small ones, who are 5, and I suppose that kept me going for another while, and to be fair it's an awful lot about the friendships that you make along the way, and you're, I suppose, being involved in Guides, we would have a huge inter-generational mix of people, which is fantastic.

So you will sit and work with, like Emily is on one of the teams for camp who's preparing ceremonies and stuff, so she on her team has people who are in their 30s right down to herself in her, y'know, at 18, and she gets on and has to take on roles and responsibilities within that. And I would have done that as a teenager, and as I came up along, and I think that's a huge aspect.

Dil: There's huge richness in that, because where else, I mean where else would an 18-year-old be able to work like that?

Jenny: Absolutely.

Dil: And learn from someone who's in their 30s? Their 50s even?

Jenny: Yeah, absolutely, and I think for, even for me, y'know, and I hit, y'know, a quite significant birthday, I'm 40 this year, but I still would have, y'know, a huge amount to learn from the women who've been, are now in their 50s, 60s, 70s even, who are still involved in Guiding, and they are constantly handing on to us, as well as encouraging us to do our own thing, and shape the organisation in a very different way. And it kind of makes you adaptable, because y'know as we move through the generations and through time, we have to adapt and look at things differently, and figure out a programme and what to do for the girls of today, and they definitely have given advice in that.

Dil: And speaking about the girls of today, I mean, we were, you and I are the same age group, Jenny, and I'm just in the process of raising young kids, y'know, and I know we had it tough when we were growing up,

Jenny: Yeah.

Dil: But let's face it, Emily and Ciara, you guys have it really tough!

Jenny: Absolutely.

Dil: Because the state of the world, and with everything that's happening, and social media, and worrying about jobs and stuff. So how do you manage to stay up to date? 'Cause a lot of people might say oh, Girl Guides, y'know, is it still relevant?

Jenny: Yeah absolutely, and it definitely is still relevant, I suppose we have the great opportunity that we can offer programmes that work for the girls, so we will do - and because we have such a variety of things.

So we do everything from, like, some of the girls were involved 2 weeks ago in a LEGO robotics camp over in DCU, in St. Pat's, others are y'know heading to camp, now we've just had a number of girls come back from travelling abroad, we've had one of our volunteers in India this week, y'know, and they all come back and will all be at camp and will share those experiences with other girls, and then we have, I suppose, we have people who are coming to camp who will also share that, Sinéad Burke is going to be down with us.

Dil: Oh, lovely!

Jenny: Yeah, Katherine Gannon will be in as well, and really giving the girls a great idea of how to be themselves in the world, and that's the theme of the camp. The theme is 'Be', and to ignite, so ignite the spark that kinda lights your flame to be whoever you want to be.

Dil: That's amazing.

Jenny: Yeah, so all of the different zones for the week of camp are all like 'Be Active', 'Be Adventurous', 'Be Brave', be... whatever, and the activities within that then will encourage the girls to try different things and to kinda step outside their comfort zone, which is really important I think, for girls of today, 'cause of the pressures that they do deal with.

Dil: And the lovely thing is that you have evolved as times have changed, as I mentioned in the introduction you made the decision to welcome transgender girls, so your Leaders are trained with how to deal with that, and also you accommodate sexuality as well.

Jenny: Yeah.

Dil: I mean, I think, was it the Boy Scouts in America or something that at one point didn't take gay boys or something.

Jenny: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It didn't necessarily go the right way or the way you'd want it to go.

Dil: And in this day and age, I mean what were they thinking?

Jenny: I know, yeah. And I suppose it's like with everything, if you're scared or if it's the unknown, it's how do you handle that well. And I suppose because we've been around for over a hundred years, we think we're fairly good at handling those kind of things, and wanting to move forward and wanting to give the girls the best example that we can give them as to the type of women and the type of people they want to be in today's society.

Dil: And Emily, to put you on the spot, just what Jenny said, what kind of woman do you want to be?

Emily: I'd say an inspirational one, just like so I can teach the girls what I've been through, so they can do it too, so it's not just a once, like they can do it as well.

Dil: Pretty awesome, that's pretty awesome. And Ciara?

Ciara: The same, inspirational.

Dil: Oh I love that, this is so good! No 'cause it's just, as I said, I do worry about the youth of today, you know, and I know I sound like an old one, y'know, but it's just great that - because Girl Guides, they tick so many boxes. The mental health, sense of belonging, y'know, you're helping girls actually increase their self-worth, self-esteem, and then y'know, be strong, be brave, y'know, and from a social justice point of view as well...

Jenny: Absolutely, yeah.

Dil: You guys talk, you have very strong values around it.

Jenny: Absolutely, and again I suppose the week gives you the opportunity to look at, like we'll be looking at the Sustainable Development Goals, and how the girls can make a change within their community, and keep their changes simple but they do actually have an impact, so the girls will explore that. And then we have a *Free Being Me* programme that the World Association [of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts] has done in conjunction with Dove, that's all about body shape and body image and being confident within themselves, they look at that. So very much like the social justice aspect will be kinda looked upon.

Dil: And well, you mentioned Dove there, I'm so glad they pulled that ad about breastfeeding.

Jenny: Yes.

Dil: Because I was not a fan of that!

Jenny: No, no.

Dil: Because I thought they'd done some amazing work about body image,

Jenny: Yes, they have done some amazing work.

Dil: And then, then they obviously got their marketing research wrong there.

Jenny: Yes.

Dil: So at least they pulled it.

Jenny: Yeah absolutely, and kind of, I suppose to be fair to them when it was pointed out to them they did do the right thing which is good too, it's good to think.

Dil: Anybody can make a mistake, as long as they rectify it.

So, listen, thank you so much for coming on the show - anyone listening to this, how can they get involved with the Girl Guides? What, where's the website?

Jenny: If... www.irishgirlguides.ie, and if they're interested in what we're getting up to on camp an awful lot of our stuff during the week is going to be livestreamed and they can check out the Irish Girl Guides' Facebook on Facebook, or they can check out IGGNite2017 on Facebook and they'll see us during the week of camp.

Dil: Fantastic. Thank you so much for joining us here on Global Village, Jenny Gannon, Camp Chief, Ciara Egan and Emily Nangle, both Girl Guides, guys thanks so much for joining us!

Ciara, Emily: Thank you.

Jenny: Thank you very much.

Dil: We have reached the end of the programme, hope you enjoyed it as much as we did putting it together for you, if you'd like to listen back you can do so by going to the newstalk.com website, and by clicking on the listen back feature, or by podcast of the show. A huge thank you to all our guests, and of course our producer Amy Ryan, coming up next is Orla Barry with the Green Room, so all that's left for me to say 'till next week is this is Dil Wickremasinghe, reminding you that we are all part of a global village.