

New Girl Guides engineering badges launched ahead of Engineers Week 2018

Engineers Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland call on public to get involved in 2018 activity

Thursday, 8 February, 2018: The Irish Girl Guides and Engineers Ireland have teamed up to develop a new education initiative that allows Guides and Brownies to earn engineering badges for the first time.

Two new engineering badges will be introduced to the Irish Girl Guides Journey Programme - one for Brownies (aged 7 to 10) and one for Guides (aged 10 to 14). The new badges, launched ahead of this year's Engineers Week, which runs from Saturday, 24 February to Friday, 2 March will encourage young girls around Ireland to work through a variety of fun engineering challenges based on creative thinking, curiosity and team-work to build an engineering mindset and to encourage girls to explore the exciting possibilities a career in engineering can offer.

Director General of Engineers Ireland, Caroline Spillane, said: "Engineering is about working collaboratively, being creative, and finding new ways to solve problems and the Irish Girl Guides is a dynamic and community-focused organisation which very much shares these values. We are delighted to have collaborated on this initiative to inspire young girls to think positively about engineering and to build awareness of the immense possibilities a career in engineering can offer."

Ms. Spillane added: "There are often narrow views and misconceptions about the 'type of person' who should pursue engineering, and through initiatives such as our collaboration with the Irish Girl Guides and our whole schedule of Engineers Week 2018 activity, we can show people that the world of engineering is open to everyone - girls, boys, creative thinkers, curious minds, problem-solvers and leaders."

Dr Ruth Freeman, Director of Strategy and Communications at Science Foundation Ireland, said: "Science Foundation Ireland is focused on engaging with young people to help inspire them to participate in and consider the study of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The new engineering badges provide a great opportunity to harness the curious and dynamic spirit that is the hallmark of Irish Girl Guides and lay the foundations for a lifelong interest or career in the area. Science Foundation Ireland is delighted to support this new education initiative through the SFI Discover Programme. I encourage everyone to get involved in Engineers Week 2018 in the coming weeks to explore this fascinating subject area and learn about how engineers shape our world."

Chief Commissioner of the Irish Girl Guides, Helen Concannon, said: "As one of the largest girl-only organisations in Ireland, we are delighted to partner with Engineers Ireland and harness our enthusiasm and their expertise to provide more opportunities for girls to engage with engineering concepts. Girl Guides is a movement that always strives to move with the times and remain relevant to young people while challenging stereotypes. We believe in our girls' capabilities and want them to develop their skills in STEM so this partnership is an ideal one for us. If we want to solve the world's challenges, we must ensure that both boys and girls can aspire to become engineers."

The Engineers Ireland STEPS team, which developed the syllabus, is to provide hands-on training to over 150 leaders at the Irish Girl Guides Annual Conference in Athlone, this Saturday, February 10. Together, they will undertake training in integrating STEM activities in their weekly meetings with

their teams. The workshops will help participants to understand what it means to be an engineer and how to guide their girls on how to earn the new engineering badges.

Now its 12th year, Engineers Week is a campaign held annually to promote engineering as a career and the importance of the profession to Ireland. Taking place from 24 February – 2 March, Engineers Week encourages primary and post-primary students, their teachers and parents to explore the exciting world of engineering as well as highlighting the diverse career opportunities engineering offers. The annual event is coordinated on a national basis by Engineers Ireland's STEPS programme - funded under Science Foundation Ireland's Discover Programme Call.

To find out more about events taking place around the country or to register an event, visit: www.engineersweek.ie As well as events organised by companies, third-level institutions and the public sector, teachers are also encouraged to run their own classroom-based activities, quizzes and competitions.

ENDS

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Notes to Editor:

About the STEPS programme

With the aim of inspiring the next generation of engineers, the Engineers Ireland STEPS programme encourages young people, teachers and parents to explore the world of engineering and to consider engineering as a career choice.

The STEPS programme is funded under Science Foundation Ireland's Discover Programme Call. STEPS runs a year-round programme of activities that includes nationwide school visits, career fairs, a Transition Year programme and a week-long festival of engineering, Engineers Week.

STEPS is managed by Engineers Ireland and supported by Science Foundation Ireland, the Department of Education and Skills, and a number of major engineering employers (Arup, ESB, TII).

About the Irish Girl Guides

The Irish Girl Guides has approximately 12,000 members. Guiding started in Ireland in 1911 and operates throughout the 26 counties with 1,800 volunteer leaders providing an informal educational programme of fun and challenging activities that foster confidence and leadership skills in girls and young women, enabling them to develop to their full potential and to become responsible

citizens. Girls from age 5+ can choose to earn a wide range of badges, including Community Action, Cultural Diversity, Disability Awareness, Drug Awareness, Online Surfer, Science Investigator and Global Traveller.

www.irishgirlguides.ie