

Irish Girl Guides press release
1 November 2018

Irish Girl Guides to address gender imbalance in boardrooms by selling 30,000 packets of cookies!

- Dragon's Den investor Alison Cowzer supports initiative that helps girls develop business skills –

Thousands of members of Irish Girl Guides (IGG) around the country are aiming to address gender imbalance in Ireland's boardrooms by selling 30,000 packets of cookies as part of the organisation's National Cookie Month [November].

Last year almost 4,000 Girl Guides from age five-plus raised €44,000 by selling 30,000 packets of cookies and the girls are all set to do the same this year. The money raised was used to fund camps and day trips and to buy equipment for the girls to use at their weekly meetings.

It's not all about the money, though. By deciding how many packets to order, how to go about selling the biscuits and how to spend the proceeds of their sales, the girls develop valuable decision-making, goal-setting and business skills.

The choc-chip cookies are made in East Coast Bakehouse in Drogheda. **Alison Cowzer, co-founder of East Coast Bakehouse and Dragon's Den investor**, has proved an invaluable mentor for IGG members, sharing with them her insider tips for making sales.

Ms Cowzer is delighted to lend her support to the cookie initiative, given that "it could take centuries to achieve equality without serious efforts to bring women into male-dominated spheres such as business and politics. No other organisation in Ireland is specifically working with girls to tackle the gender imbalance in business and so I am very happy to be a part of this project, which is helping foster a spirit of entrepreneurship among Irish girls and young women.

"The Irish Girl Guides is a proactive and forward-thinking organisation, which gives girls confidence and the opportunity to develop essential life-skills. I have seen my own daughters greatly benefit from their involvement in IGG."

Ms Cowzer is looking forward to welcoming members of Merlin Woods Guides, Galway, to the Bakehouse tomorrow [2 November]. The girls won a trip to the factory by being the IGG unit to sell the most cookies during IGG's inaugural National Cookie Month last November – 1,560 packets!

IGG Chief Commissioner Helen Concannon says, "Last year's Cookie Month was such a success we decided to do it again this year. We have given the project the hashtag #FutureCEOs, which stands for Creating Entrepreneur Opportunities, and it is hoped that all girls who get involved will develop and strengthen their goal-setting, decision-making, communication and entrepreneurial skills.

"We want to change the imbalance of the number of women in decision-making positions across the various sectors of society such as business, communities, companies and boardrooms all around Ireland and beyond. And this begins by giving girls opportunities to develop confidence.

"We heard numerous stories from leaders and parents last year saying how their girls started out as shy salespeople unsure of how to even begin and ended up savvy businesswomen. The number of units that came to us to order more cookies to sell is testament to the success of the girls developing their skills.

“As a non-profit organisation, all monies raised are invested in the organisation to help fulfil its mission to help girls and young women reach their fullest potential,” Ms Concannon added.

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members age 5+ and adult volunteers from age 18+ (no previous Guiding experience is necessary). For further info see www.irishgirlguides.ie or tel: 01-6683898.

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Notes for editors:

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, Engineering and Global Traveller.

East Coast Bakehouse, based in Drogheda, Co Louth, produces cookies and biscuits for the Irish market and for export to over 20 countries around the world. With a team of 65, the company is Ireland's only large-scale biscuit manufacturing business. Approximately 99% of biscuits sold in Ireland are imported - we're aiming to change that and our Irish Made range is now available in all major retailers nationwide.