

Irish Girl Guides press release

18 November 2018

Irish Girl Guides invent sustainable water solutions with Lego!

- Irish Girl Guides partners with Dublin City University, Learnit Lego Education and Science Foundation Ireland to encourage girls to pursue STEM –

Two hundred members of Irish Girl Guides have come up with a selection of innovative water solutions using Lego, which they showcased at an expo in Dublin City University yesterday [Saturday 17 November 2018].

The Brownies (Brownies is the branch of Irish Girl Guides for 7-10 year olds), who worked in teams of four, spent five weeks researching the issue of water sustainability and exploring innovative ways to preserve water.

Each team designed, built and programmed an autonomous motorised Lego model incorporating a range of sensors and motors. Each team also designed a poster with diagrams of the solution(s) they had come up with, the feasibility of executing the project and details of the programme used. Each group of four girls also underwent an interview with an assessor about their solution(s).

Their work culminated in yesterday's expo – similar to the BT Young Scientist Exhibition - where the girls displayed their projects and were on hand to explain to families, friends and visitors the creative solutions they had come up with.

The project, Irish Girl Guides Innovatively Engaging with STEM (IGGIES), is a partnership with Dublin City University's Learnit Lego Education and is sponsored by Science Foundation Ireland.

Irish Girl Guides National Programme and Training Commissioner Jenny Gannon said the organisation was delighted to undertake the project with Brownies from Dublin, Meath, Louth, Cavan, Monaghan, Cork and Carlow. "Earlier this year 200 Brownies from Wicklow, Kildare and Dublin took part in the first phase of IGGIES and it's been great to give another 200 Brownies from other counties the same opportunity," she said.

"Irish Girl Guides believes in challenging stereotypes and we have undertaken a number of initiatives in recent years to encourage our members to pursue STEM subjects in school and to consider pursuing careers in STEM.

"We are also committed to encouraging our girls to dream big and to take action to make a difference in their local communities and in the wider world. The IGGIES project is just one of a number of activities we are using to help our members learn about the Sustainable Development Goals and to explore ways in which they can help make the world a better place."

Prof Deirdre Butler of the Institute of Education, Dublin City University, said, “The need to address the gender imbalance in STEM disciplines and careers is well documented. We in DCU are excited about our partnership with the Irish Girl Guides and believe that this organisation is uniquely positioned to address gender equity in STEM education in Ireland as, through their organisation they have reach to approximately 10,000 females aged 5-30 years.

“To ignite early kernels of interest, we are working with the Brownies and building on the need to develop girls’ understanding of how STEM subjects can be applied in real-life situations, we have been focusing on a project based around the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal of Water.

“Encouraging these young girls to ask questions about the world, to problem solve and to use natural creativity through play, creativity, and experimentation we believe can lead to them engaging in innovative STEM-related careers in the future.”

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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.