

Irish Girl Guides press release

6 April 2018

Award-winning space explorer and science communicator set to blaze a trail for Irish Girl Guides

- Dr Niamh Shaw is named as Irish Girl Guides' Honorary Ambassador –

Award-winning space explorer and science communicator Niamh Shaw PhD is set to blaze a trail for Irish Girl Guides (IGG) over the course of the next 12 months.

Dr Shaw, who describes herself as an Irish engineer, scientist, artist, performer, space explorer and award-winning science communicator with a passion to ignite curiosity about space and the world around us, was named Honorary Ambassador at IGG's annual Council meeting held in Tallaght this afternoon (6 April 2019). Dr Shaw was chosen in recognition of the trail she has blazed for girls and women in Ireland.

IGG President Maureen Murphy said IGG members were excited to have Dr Niamh Shaw as the organisation's new Ambassador. "She has stated her wish to ignite people's curiosity and has a big dream to travel in space," said Ms Murphy. "Niamh has already met some of our members at the FIRST LEGO League finals in Dublin City University.

"Guiding is about providing new experiences and challenges to enable each girl to reach her own potential in today's world, so Niamh is a very appropriate role model, inspirer and Honorary Ambassador."

Dr Shaw, who is Dublin-based but regularly travels to Blackrock Castle Observatory in Cork where she is artist-in-residence, is particularly interested in encouraging girls and women to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects. This ties in nicely with IGG's aim to encourage girls and young women to consider STEM careers by inviting them to earn STEM, Engineering, Science Investigator and Online Surfer badges.

"What I'm particularly interested in, during my term as Ambassador, is empowering Girl Guides to pursue in life what they are most passionate about, which is usually what they are also most curious about," said Dr Shaw. "STEM will naturally play its part in that exploration, so rather than promote STEM in isolation, I want to encourage them to see STEM as a suite of tools with which to unearth and explore what they are most passionate about. And they can use this knowledge to enhance this passion directly or indirectly.

"STEM subjects can belong in a creative environment as much as a technical one. If I can achieve success in delivering that message to Girl Guides in the next year, then I will feel that I have made a worthy contribution to Irish Girl Guides. And, since my passion is space, I would also like to explore the creation of a space badge too, if possible."

Dr Shaw, who was a member of IGG for some of her childhood, has fond memories of her time in the organisation. She was disappointed that it was difficult to stay involved because the family moved location frequently.

“I remember one time we had to collect the leaves of different trees, which led me to read and research more on the topic. And there was no internet then to do a simple Google search! Thankfully, we had the children's encyclopaedia, so I referred to that a lot, and to other nature books in the house. To this day, I still test myself on tree identification!”

Dr Shaw said she was delighted to be selected as IGG Ambassador. “It’s a huge honour,” she says, “And I’m really looking forward to the year ahead.”

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members from age 5+ and volunteer Leaders from age 18+. To find out more, see www.irishgirlguides.ie or telephone 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 and Global Traveller.

Dr Niamh Shaw

- LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/niamhshaw/>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/nshawredscientist/>
- Website: www.niamhshaw.ie
- Twitter: @dr_niamh_shaw
- Instagram: @dr_niamh_shaw
- Also some links below to recent speaking events: at Aras an Uachtarain, at WIRED UK etc - [LinkedIn](#) [Website](#) [YouTube](#)

Artist in Residence, CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory

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