

Irish Girl Guides press release

6 June 2019

Girl Guides blast off 'Into Orbit' in LEGO space mission

- LEGO Robotics Summer Academy in Dublin City University encourages members of Irish Girl Guides to pursue STEM -

Twenty-one members of Irish Girl Guides (IGG) successfully completed a mission to blast off 'Into Orbit' at a LEGO Robotics Summer Academy run by LearnIT LEGO Education in Dublin City University's LEGO Education Innovation Studio.

The girls, who were aged between 12 and 17, were selected from dozens of aspiring IGG space explorers who applied to take part in the project. Through a series of hands-on, engaging workshops, the girls discovered programming concepts, experienced elements of computational thinking and developed an understanding of a range of mechanical engineering procedures. They worked in teams of four researching topics as varied as radiation to depression and loneliness in space.

At the end of the four-day academy, each group gave a presentation on their research project at a special ceremony held in DCU's Lego Education Innovation Studio, which many of the girls' parents attended. Each team also participated in a robotics challenge using the robots they had designed and programmed.

Dara Callanan, an IGG Leader from Drogheda who has recently qualified as a Science teacher from DCU, said the Guides had enjoyed their time exploring STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). "It's been great to see them engage with STEM challenges in a fun and interesting way," she said. "It's great too to see them being collaborative thinkers and resilient problem-solvers.

"Each group had to be determined to fix every problem they encountered, even when their robot seemed to have a mind of its own and wasn't quite doing what they wanted it to," she said. "Taking part in the academy reminded the girls that it's OK not to be perfect first time around and that making mistakes and working hard on something can actually make it better than it ever could be with just a perfect first try."

She continued, "The whole project has been fantastic – the girls have learned about maths, physics, engineering, communication, teamwork and so much more – and they had a great time while doing it. As a Science teacher myself, I love to see young people actively engaging in STEM and having the opportunity to really love doing it. Hopefully, it will encourage the girls to think about studying STEM and see the value STEM skills add to all aspects of their lives."

At the special ceremony at the close of the Academy, each girl was presented with a certificate and a medal by **IGG Chief Commissioner Helen Concannon** and Prof Deirdre Butler of DCU's STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies department.

"The girls have developed their STEM skills through the Academy and learned how to harness each person's individual skills so as to create amazing group projects," said Ms Concannon. "Working together, they have valued each person's contribution and impressed us with their ingenuity. They are excellent role models for our younger members and prove the relevance of STEM to all - both boys and girls."

Daire Keogh, Deputy President of DCU, said he was delighted to attend the ceremony. "It is hugely important for DCU to partner with the Irish Girl Guides as we share a vision of transformation and the empowerment of women and girls," he said. "We're in total agreement with Guides when they say, 'Girls With Dreams Become Women With Vision'."

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members from age 5+ and new volunteer Leaders from age 18+. No previous Guiding experience is necessary. For further information, see www.irishgirlguides.ie or tel: 01 6683898.

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Irish Girl Guides

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 Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Community Action, Cultural Diversity, Disability Awareness, Drug Awareness, Online Surfer, Science Investigator, Engineering, Aviation, STEM, Climate Action and Global Traveller. www.irishgirlguides.ie