

Irish Girl Guides press release

14 June 2019

Over 600 Ladybirds to celebrate their 30th birthday!

- Irish Girl Guides' youngest members will descend on Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park to party -

More than 600 Ladybirds – the youngest members of Irish Girl Guides – will take part in a massive celebration tomorrow [Saturday 15 June 2019] to mark their 30th birthday.

Ladybirds, who are girls aged five to seven, will travel from all over the country to party at Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park with more than 300 girls and 100 volunteer Leaders attending each event.

Ladybirds, who meet each week in their local community to take part in activities, games, songs and crafts, can't wait to meet up with Ladybirds from other counties to celebrate their milestone birthday.

"We will have music, dancing, lots of activities and a big cake at each event," says **Monica McDonnell, Chair of Irish Girl Guides (IGG) Ladybird Branch**. "The girls at Dublin Zoo will be joined by a special guest - award-winning space explorer and science communicator Dr Niamh Shaw who will tell them about her space adventures."

While Guides (the branch of IGG for 10-14 year olds) started in Ireland in 1911, Brownies (the branch for 7-10 year olds) started in 1914 and Senior Branch (the branch for 14-30 year olds) in 1919, the Ladybird branch only started 30 years ago when it was decided to introduce Guiding to girls of a younger age.

A pilot Ladybird unit in Ballybrack, Dublin, was such a success that in 1989 Ladybirds was officially launched by then Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke. Within a year there were 33 Ladybird units operating throughout the country. Today there are over 2,000 Ladybirds throughout the 26 counties.

"The Ladybird programme encourages girls to care and share, to think of others and to contribute to their local communities," said Monica, who is Leader of Cúchulainn Ladybirds in Drogheda. "Each girl is encouraged to try her best and learn new skills and is rewarded for doing the best she can.

"The girls can earn badges for all kinds of things, like Road Safety, Healthy Mind, Performing Arts, Environmental Awareness, Voting and STEM. During their time with us, we see the Ladybirds grow in confidence and independence while making new friends and having a lot of fun."

IGG Chief Commissioner Helen Concannon said: "Trying to stay relevant and in touch with each new generation of young girls can be a challenging task but it is one the Irish Girl Guides excels at. Thousands of Ladybirds have benefited from their involvement in IGG and

most move on to Brownies (aged 7-10) and Guides (aged 10-14) where they continue to grow in independence, develop essential life-skills and are introduced to the international aspects of the Guiding movement."

Monica concluded, "The parties wouldn't be possible without our sponsors - Impression Design and Print, The Galway Bay, Tayto, Fyffes and the staff of Deloitte. All of these have donated to us, which has been a massive help. Also, thanks to Dublin Zoo and Fota for allowing us to celebrate the birthday in their venues. We can't wait!"

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members from age 5+ and volunteer Leaders from age 18+. No previous experience of Guiding is necessary. See www.irishgirlguides.ie for more information or tel: 01 6683898.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

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 Community Action, Cultural Diversity, Disability Awareness, Drug Awareness, Online Surfer, Science Investigator, Engineering, Aviation, STEM, Climate Action and Global Traveller.

www.irishgirlguides.ie