

**Irish Girl Guides press release**

Embargo: 00:01 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019

## **Girl Guides to develop business skills by selling cookies**

**- Dragons' Den investor Alison Cowzer helps spearhead entrepreneurial initiative –**

Members of Irish Girl Guides (IGG) from age five-plus will be honing their entrepreneurial skills this month [November] by selling cookies.

A total of 40,000 packets of cookies will be sold during IGG's National Cookie Month. By deciding how many packets to order, how to go about selling the biscuits and how they will spend the proceeds of their sales, the girls will develop business, communication, teamwork and public relations skills.

This is the third year that Girl Guides in Ireland will sell cookies – a practice which has been commonplace in the USA for years. For safety reasons, the girls will not be knocking on doors but will be using their initiative by selling to families, friends and neighbours. Some have sought permission to set up a stall outside a local shop or business.

Last year around 2,500 of IGG's 10,000 youth members took part in the fundraising initiative with 25,000 packets sold, raising €25,000 for their local Guide units. 10,000 packets were donated to homeless and direct provision centres. The money raised was used to fund camps and day trips and to buy equipment for the girls to use at their weekly meetings.

Carrigaline unit in Cork sold the most cookies last year, selling a total of 1,536 packets of cookies. Their Leader, **Aisling Claffey**, says they managed to sell so many because the girls became very passionate about the initiative – “they all believed in it and worked really hard” – and the local community was hugely supportive with the local Super Valu allowing the Guides set up a stall outside their shop.

“The Guide unit became the Carrigaline Cookie Company with all the Guides as employees working in different departments – management, marketing, HR, sales and distribution and finance,” says Aisling. “We continued the company after Cookie Month and into the New Year when they continued to work in their departments and earned a number of more Guide badges, including Money Matters, Healthy Mind and Online Safety.”

This year, for the first time, the girls will sell two different products. As well as the original choc-chip cookies, they will also be selling all butter chocolate-enrobed chocolate chunk cookies. This is thanks to a grant from the Ulster Bank Skills and Opportunities Fund, which helped fund research into a new flavour and develop new promotional materials. One hundred and twenty-five Guides participated in a taste test of seven flavours and the chocolate chunk cookies were a clear winner!

Both flavours of 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, she says, “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.

She continues, “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.”

**IGG Chief Commissioner Helen Concannon** says, “Our Cookie Month the past two years was such a success we decided to do it again. 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.

“Over the past two years we have heard numerous stories from Guide Leaders and parents saying how their girls started out as shy salespeople unsure of how to even begin and ended up savvy businesswomen. 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](http://www.irishgirlguides.ie) or tel: 01-6683898.*

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**Notes for editors:**

Irish Girl Guides has around 11,000 members. Guiding started in Ireland in 1911 and operates throughout the 26 counties with 1,600 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 Aviation, Community Action, Cultural Diversity, Disability Awareness, Drug Awareness, Online Surfer, Science Investigator, STEM, 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.