

Irish Girl Guides press release

Girl Guides go global to empower 100,000 girls and young women to Lead out Loud

- Irish Girl Guides host 23 Guide Leaders from 18 countries as part of worldwide leadership seminar -

Wednesday 13 November 2019: Irish Girl Guides members are today welcoming 23 Girl Guide Leaders from 18 countries across the globe to a leadership development seminar they are hosting at Gormanston Park, Co Meath.

This is the first time Irish Girl Guides (IGG) is hosting the international *Juliette Low Seminar* - a week-long training for young Guide Leaders that is organised by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) every three years.

The seminar has taken place in many different countries since it was first held in *Our Chalet* Guiding World Centre in Switzerland in 1932 but this is the first time for it to come to Ireland. It is also the first time for it to take place in more than one location as there are 18 hubs around the world running simultaneously with a total of 500 young women taking part and 150 facilitators and volunteers.

The Guide Leaders attending the Irish hub have travelled from as far away as Lebanon, Malawi, Ghana, Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar, USA and Barbados as well as other parts of Europe, including Spain, Italy, Austria, Croatia, Finland and the Ukraine.

Meanwhile, 11 IGG members have packed their suitcases and are heading off to hubs across the world, including Poland, Mexico, the USA, Nigeria, Oman and Madagascar.

The 500 Guide Leaders will be following the same *Lead Out Loud* programme in each hub, which will see them develop their leadership skills and learn how to tackle gender barriers to leadership so that they can take the lead and bring about change in their communities.

Each participant will be asked to share their learnings with 100+ younger Girl Guides on their return home. By doing this over the next two years, it is expected that 100,000 girls and young women throughout the world will be encouraged and empowered to take on leadership roles in their communities and, in so doing, to have a significant positive impact on society.

Speaking ahead of the Juliette Low Seminar, **IGG International Commissioner Jenna Goodwin** said: "It is a privilege for Irish Girl Guides to have been selected as one of the 18 hubs hosting the Juliette Low Seminar. We are excited to welcome Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from around the world to Ireland and to host this seminar for them. In addition to this, we would like to wish our 11 members travelling to other hubs around the world the very best of luck. It will be a fantastic experience to be part of this massive global leadership event.

"We believe there is unlimited potential in girls and young women," continued Jenna. "We encourage our members from age five-plus to develop, learn, speak out, demand change and take on leadership roles. We create future leaders by helping girls and young women realise their potential through innovative learning and leadership opportunities and by giving them the skills and opportunities to develop their leadership skills."

Lorna Finnegan, Irish Hub Team Lead, said: "This is a unique opportunity for Irish Girl Guides to be involved in a historic event that will be shared with hundreds of young women globally. It allows us to provide more international opportunities for more young women to develop their leadership potential and grow in confidence. And we all know what confident young women can achieve when they put their minds to it!"

"The young women who will attend this event in Ireland and abroad will return to their own communities to work on a self-directed project that will impact the lives of many more girls and young women in their local areas," she added. "The possibilities stemming from the ripple effect of this event are immeasurable."

Although the 500 participants will follow a broadly similar programme no matter which hub they attend, they will all have an opportunity to experience local cuisine and culture as well. Guides from Co Meath will introduce those attending the Irish hub to Irish dancing. Participants will also visit Newgrange, the V&W Recycling Centre in Drogheda and Sonairte National Ecology Centre where they will lend a hand with weeding and other gardening tasks.

They will also hear three motivational speakers during an *Empowerment Evening* on Sunday when the speakers will be children's rights advocate, former Senator and former IGG Chief Commissioner **Jillian van Turnhout**, award-winning STEM communicator and IGG Ambassador **Dr Niamh Shaw** and **Ciara-Beth Griffin**, an education rights' activist and inspirational young Guide Leader from Galway who designed the Mi Contact app to help children with autism improve their eye contact skills.

Aisling Claffey, IGG Assistant International Commissioner who is one of the facilitators at the Irish hub, said she was looking forward to welcoming a diverse group of Guide Leaders to Ireland. "It is a fantastic opportunity to be able to facilitate alongside such a motivated, enthusiastic and passionate group of people," she said. "We all attended a training in Uganda last year to prepare and we have been working together for months now and can't wait to see our plans and sessions happen."

Elizabeth Lynch, IGG's North East Regional Commissioner and a Guide Leader in Kells and Mosney, will also be facilitating the Irish hub. She said: "I'm really excited to be part of the Juliette Low Seminar here in Ireland. I'm delighted to be sharing the theme of *Lead Out Loud* with participants from all around the world. It's fantastic to think that they will go back to their countries ready to share the WAGGGS goal of empowering young girls and women to speak out in their communities and become change-makers."

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members from age 5+ and 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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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.

The **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts** is the largest voluntary organisation for girls and young women in the world. It is the umbrella organisation for 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 150 countries and we understand the issues that matter to girls because they tell us. Around the world, girls and young women face barriers, discrimination and inequality but we believe that every girl has the potential to change this and we empower and equip them to do so. We are here for every girl and any girl.

Juliette Low Seminar - In 1912 Juliette Gordon Low (1860–1927) founded Girl Scouts of the USA, an organisation that today serves millions of girl members and alumnae and reflects the arc of her remarkable life. From a first gathering of a small troop of 18 culturally and ethnically diverse girls, Juliette broke the conventions of the time—reaching across class, cultural, and ethnic boundaries to ensure all girls had a place to grow and develop their leadership skills. Using her innate talent for fundraising and public relations, combined with her vast network of friends and supporters, she led Girl Scouts with passion and determination—ensuring it was, and always would be, an experience that was “girl-led.” Today the vision of Juliette Gordon Low lives on around the globe in the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts who carry on her legacy.