

Irish Girl Guides press release

17 February 2020

Girl Guides pledge to reduce plastic waste with Responsible Consumerism initiative

- Irish Girl Guides' 11,000 members commit to no single-use plastic parties, days out, camps, conferences and other events –**
- Teenagers devise sustainability programme following visit to India -**

Irish Girl Guides' members are set to significantly reduce their consumption of single-use plastics following their launch of a Responsible Consumerism initiative.

The organisation's 11,000 members have committed to organising birthday parties, days out, camps, conferences and other events without the use of single-use plastics.

With the introduction of the new Responsible Consumerism programme, Irish Girl Guides (IGG) youth members from age 5-30 will learn about the importance of re-use and recycling and about the impact of plastic on the environment. They will also carry out litter picks in their local communities.

Ladybirds (aged 5-7) will re-use soft plastics to make balls to play games with while Brownies (aged 7-10) will play a 'Journey to Sustainability' boardgame, make beeswax wrap and design books about living sustainably.

Guides (aged 10-14) will learn about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and discuss what SDG12 *Responsible Consumption and Production* means to them. They will learn how to compost and will choose between making sports equipment out of recycled materials, organising an upcycled fashion show or creating junk couture.

Senior Branch members (aged 14-30) will undertake service projects in their local communities. They will teach younger IGG members what can and can't be recycled and will go plastic-free for a week and blog or post on social media about their experience.

All members who successfully complete the Responsible Consumerism activities for their age group will earn an SDG12 badge, which has been developed with funding from Irish Aid.

IGG Programme and Training Commissioner, Jenny Gannon, said the SDGs were an integral part of the organisation's work with girls and young women and they were delighted to add another SDG badge to the programme. IGG already had badges based on SDG3 Health and Well-being and SDG13 Climate Action.

"The badge has been developed by some of our Senior Branch members and it has been fantastic seeing them plan and create the curriculum," she said. "Earning the badge will help our members look after the planet better. Imagine 11,000 parties with no plastic wastage! No balloons, no plastic straws or single-use cups. We're all about enabling and empowering

girls and helping them realise what an impact they can have on the world around them. That's what Guiding is all about - girls developing skills to be advocates in their own lives and for issues that are important to them and the world around them," she said.

The Senior Branch members who designed the Responsible Consumerism programme, including devising the Journey to Sustainability boardgame, were inspired to do so during a trip to Sangam World Guide Centre in Pune, India, last summer.

Patricia Gutteridge (16), a member of Tralee Senior Branch, said it was very important that people in Ireland learned to cut waste because the earth couldn't handle the amount of waste being produced and, with an ever-growing population, we would only continue to destroy the environment until it was no longer habitable. "We started by writing down all the things we noticed in India that could help us develop the badge," she said. "Next we worked on the badge criteria – there are different activities for each age group and we wanted to make sure the girls would enjoy doing them.

"Working to complete the badge will give girls ideas on how to be more sustainable and how to be more responsible consumers. If every one of our members makes an effort to become more sustainable, then we, as an organisation, can make a big and much needed difference. I believe all girls and leaders who complete the badge will be more aware of, not only the problems surrounding waste and recycling, but also how to be a part of the solution."

Teagan Stanley (17) of Dílse Senior Branch in Carnmore, Galway, said it had been inspiring seeing how people and businesses in India were reducing their waste in sensible and inventive ways. "Food waste didn't really seem to be a thing in India," she said. "Any food that wasn't eaten or served was re-cooked into a new and totally different meal for the next day. The meals they made were really creative and delicious. Any single-use plates or cutlery were made out of banana leaves or bamboo – both in poorer areas and in the business sector.

"I came home with the conviction that it is really important for us in Ireland to understand more about the SDGs and what we can do to help make the world a better place. It has been incredible to see our ideas progress and come together into a real workable programme for girls and young women. If everyone in IGG does the badge and changes their habits, it will make a big impact on the organisation's footprint."

As a result of their work producing the Responsible Consumerism programme, Patricia and Teagan were invited to address the President of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, Mr Tijjani Muhammad-Band, and hundreds of young climate activists from around the country at a UN Youth Delegate event in Farmleigh House on 30 November 2019.

The text of their speech may be viewed on the IGG website – www.irishgirlguides.ie.

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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 1,500 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, Engineering, Science Investigator, STEM and Global Traveller.