

Irish Girl Guides press release
18 March 2021

The resilience Girl Guides gain from Guiding has helped them cope with Covid challenges

- Irish Girl Guides volunteers and youth members say the skills they have learned through Guiding have helped them get through the past year -

The past year has been tough for everyone, but members of Irish Girl Guides (IGG) say the resilience they have developed through their involvement in Guiding has helped them cope with the unique challenges everyone has faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

From the age of five, IGG members are introduced to ways to boost their mental health and to develop problem-solving skills. Ladybirds (aged five to seven) and Brownies (aged seven to 10) are encouraged to identify positive qualities in themselves, discuss feelings and express them appropriately. They learn various relaxation techniques, including mindfulness and yoga.

Guides (aged 10-14) learn positive communication skills, including how to give affirmations to others and how to accept them in return. They also learn how to identify signs of stress in themselves and ways to deal with these stresses.

Senior Branch members (aged 14-30) have many opportunities for personal growth and development by taking on leadership roles and through participation in camps and challenges in Ireland and overseas. The Chief Commissioner's Award sees Senior Branch members hiking 80 kilometres over five days while carrying all their camping and cooking equipment, food and clothes, while keeping a log and carrying out a series of projects along the way. All without a phone and with only €3.50 to spend each day! There is little doubt participants gain resilience and coping skills in these tough circumstances.

Speaking ahead of International Day of Happiness [Saturday 20 March 2021], **IGG Chief Executive Officer, Claire Barkey**, says: "As we face a global crisis together, it is essential we find positive ways to look after ourselves and each other. This year's International Day of Happiness theme is 'Keep calm, stay wise, be kind', which is closely aligned to the IGG ethos.

"IGG is all about enabling and encouraging girls and young women to reach their full potential and to contribute positively to their local communities and, as they get older, to the wider world too. At this time, we encourage our members to be kind to each other but also to ourselves, to support others' well-being and our own.

"It is so important at this time that we stay connected and reach out to help others. Our volunteer leaders have done a fantastic job in continuing to engage with our youth members in many different and creative ways. Some are holding online meetings and some are dropping activity packs to girls' homes.

“Many of our volunteers and youth members have shared with us how the resilience and coping skills they have gained through Guiding have helped them cope with the challenges they have faced as a result of the Covid pandemic. Covid has helped us identify the elements of ‘community’ that provide strength and support to each of us, which we may have taken for granted.”

Theresa McCarthy, a volunteer IGG leader in Bandon, Co Cork, says, “It has been really difficult living through the Covid restrictions but I’ve realised how the coping and resilience skills I have gained through Guiding have helped to get me through this time of crisis. As a volunteer leader with IGG, I know that if you try something one way and it doesn’t work, then you try another way. And many times this past year I have needed to find that other way of doing things – when I couldn’t travel, I was unable to meet people and wasn’t even able to buy things - but I coped. If something didn’t work the first time, I tried and tried again.

“Resilience will help us get through this time of Covid. We’re not born with resilience; it is built up over time and I am delighted that IGG has helped me build up the resilience and coping skills that will get me through this time of crisis.”

Irish Girl Guides welcomes new members from age 5+ and volunteer leaders from age 18+. No previous experience of Girl Guides is necessary. To find out more, see www.irishgirlguides.ie or telephone 01-6683898.

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Notes for editors:

Irish Girl Guides has approximately 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 Community Action, Climate Action, Cultural Diversity, Disability Awareness, Drug Awareness, Engineering, Europe, Science Investigator, STEM and Global Traveller. www.irishgirlguides.ie

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International Day of Happiness is a global celebration coordinated by Action for Happiness, a non-profit movement of people from 160 countries, supported by a partnership of like-minded organisations. As well as being a fun celebration, it also serves as a reminder that the world is a better place when we connect with and care about the people around us.
www.dayofhappiness.net