

Sweat – The Sweet Taste of Success

Swords Students Scoop Award At Blanchardstown IT SciFest

Friday, May 29th 2015: First year students Benjamin Basic, Luke Adams and Dylan Rooney from Fingal Community College, were recently announced winners of the *Best Communication Award* at the SciFest@College 2015 regional final in Blanchardstown IT for their project, ‘*Can you drink sweat?*’ with support from their science teacher, Louise McDonnell and the school’s SciFest co-ordinator Claire Scanlon.

This is the fourth year running that MSD has worked with the local secondary school to identify the best projects to submit forward to the SciFest regional finals in Blanchardstown IT. This is the second phase of the Scifest national programme, overseen by the Science Foundation Ireland, of which aims to encourage students into third level courses and careers in STEM, through collaborative, inquiry-based learning.

The students, well used to success, were originally chosen as the strongest project at Fingal Community College’s SciFest@School, by a panel of guest judges which included Chris O’Connell and Damien Walsh, both laboratory analysts from MSD’s facility in Swords.

Chris O’Connell, Laboratory Analyst, MSD said, “*The effort and innovation of students and staff each year is amazing, Every team of students worked so hard on their research and it is no easy feat to present to judges as we walked the floor. It is even better to see that the chosen project, Can you drink sweat?, has gone on to win at Blanchardstown IT. It bodes well for our industry that such talent is at our doorstep! Well done to all the students and teachers involved in SciFest@School in Swords and SciFest at Blanchardstown Institute of Technology.*”

The judges did not have an easy task as this year’s SciFest@School in Fingal Community College’s main hall showcased a wealth of talent and ingenuity as over 80 science projects from over 180 students were displayed over one day. In addition, the schools fair opened its doors to over 400 visiting students from 4th, 5th, and 6th class in local primary schools including; Swords Educate Together, St. Colmcille’s (both girls and boys National schools), St. Cronan’s National School, Holywell Educate Together and Old Borough National School. The school also made sure that they were entertaining hosts as a bespoke fun zone was set up, encouraging visitors to engage with games, puzzles and brain teasers all the while learning and having fun with science.

Support for the event is provided by SciFest in the form of a SciFest Science Exhibition Toolkit and resources on the SciFest website. From just 5 schools in 2011, the number participating increased to 35 in 2014 of which some 3154 students presented 1332 projects. SciFest@School science fairs are held throughout the school year, before March 13th, in order to select projects to go forward SciFest@College 2015. This affords students the opportunity to visit a third-level college, view the facilities and get information on the various STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) courses available. For more information visit www.scifest.ie

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Notes to the Editor

About MSD

MSD, known as Merck in the United States and Canada, has operations in more than 140 countries. In Ireland, MSD employs over 2,000 people across its five sites in Dublin, Carlow, Cork, Tipperary and Wicklow. Its extensive Irish operations encompass manufacturing, commercial and marketing facilities.

MSD is a leader in healthcare, dedicated to helping the world be well through a wide range of innovative health solutions. This includes the development, production and distribution of prescription medicines, vaccines and biologic therapies as well as animal health products.

MSD's commitment to research and to increasing access to healthcare across the world is demonstrated by clearly focused policies, far-reaching programmes and life-enhancing partnerships.

About SciFest

SciFest is a series of one-day science fairs for second-level students hosted locally in schools and at regional level in the Institutes of Technology.

The SciFest project consists of four distinct strands – local, regional, national and international. The aim of the project is to encourage a love of science, technology and maths through active, collaborative, inquiry-based learning and to provide a forum for students at local, regional and national level to present and display their scientific investigations.