

PRESS RELEASE

TRAINEE ASTRONAUT LAUNCHES NEW CAMPAIGN CHAMPIONING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS (STEM) AMONG STUDENTS

- Mairead McGuinness MEP joins Dr Norah Patten, Ireland's only astronaut in training, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and others in Sligo to showcase AbbVie-backed initiative
- *Back to School for STEM* will see the company's employees proactively engaging with schools, teachers and students to promote career opportunities in the STEM disciplines
- Initiative follows the publication of a recent report highlighting the importance of promoting pharmaceutical industry role models
- Experts agree a strong supply of STEM graduates is vital to the future strength and competitiveness of the Irish economy

Sligo, Monday 27th August, 2018: Mairead McGuinness MEP was one of a number of speakers at the launch of a new science education initiative which took place earlier today at the biopharmaceutical company AbbVie's site in Ballytivnan, Sligo.

The MEP was joined by representatives from Science Foundation Ireland, trainee astronaut Dr Norah Patten and others to showcase ***Back to School for STEM***, a new schools outreach focused on promoting science role models currently active in the Irish workplace.

The initiative, which will be delivered by AbbVie employees, aims to encourage greater student awareness of the rewarding career opportunities that can be unlocked by studying STEM subjects.

In 2017, AbbVie published a multi-stakeholder report exploring the barriers to engagement in science-related subjects and careers. The document highlighted the negative impact that low levels of STEM student interest might have on Ireland's employee talent pipeline, particularly in high-value pharma, biopharma and medical device sectors.

Among the key recommendations of the *STEM Paths* report was a need to highlight the positive personal experiences of young Irish people currently working across Irish industry within the STEM disciplines.

The *Back to School for STEM* initiative will see employees from AbbVie's five different Irish sites visit schools, including those they themselves studied at, to talk about their jobs and the difference their work makes to wider society.

The outreach, supported by Science Foundation Ireland, will also detail the many exciting employment possibilities that a strong STEM education can help unlock.

Speaking at the launch, **Mairead McGuinness MEP**, who is also the current Vice President of the European Parliament, said that she was delighted to support the initiative.



“I have no doubt this programme will help raise awareness amongst young people of the attractive and diverse careers that are currently available in Ireland with the many companies active within the STEM sectors.

“AbbVie’s ongoing efforts to support STEM in our communities is welcome and it highlights the benefit of a partnership approach between schools, industry and other organisations to ensure that young people, teachers and parents are aware of the exciting opportunities that are available with excellent companies.”

Dr Norah Patten provided a stirring key note address at the *Back to School for STEM* launch. Norah has a PhD in Aeronautical engineering from University of Limerick and is also a faculty member at the International Space University. She is a Scientist-Astronaut candidate with Project PoSSUM and is determined to be Ireland's first person in space.

A passionate STEM advocate, Norah highlighted that Ireland’s ambition to be a significant global player in the life sciences, tech and related sectors could only be fulfilled if young students were excited about science, engineering, space and a host of other STEM-related activities.

“Role models are vital if young people are to be inspired and encouraged to consider committing to STEM educational pathways and potential careers. As the saying goes 'you can't be what you can't see'. Support, motivation and encouragement are fundamental and there are key people along everyone's journey who are influential in terms of subject and career choices.

“We need to continuously highlight the broad range of opportunities that come from studying STEM disciplines. The way to do this is to interact with the various stakeholders – parents, teachers, students, career guidance counsellors and others – and showcase what studying STEM can open up for boys and girls,” she added.

AbbVie recently announced a €113 million expansion in oncology-focused manufacturing technology at their Ballytivnan site in Sligo. The investment will create approximately 100 new jobs over the course of three years in a variety of technical and manufacturing positions. Ballytivnan Site Director **Columba McGarvey** explained that a research-driven innovative company like AbbVie, which is expanding its footprint in Ireland, had to be proactive in its support of STEM in local communities.

“Ireland has a highly developed employee talent base but the global market is very competitive and it is still incredibly important to help cultivate and foster our future talent pipeline.

“The products manufactured by companies in the Irish life sciences sector are highly innovative and positively impact millions of people around the world. However young students, perhaps like many in wider Irish society, may not fully understand this pioneering industry and fail to appreciate the incredible career paths that could be available to them.”



Speaking about the event, **Professor Mark Ferguson**, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government of Ireland, said: “I am delighted to see this important campaign being launched. At Science Foundation Ireland we are committed to improving student perceptions of STEM, and are supportive of efforts to bring them into contact with superb role models. Encouraging our young people to become involved in STEM from an early age is crucial to guiding them towards a future that is both enjoyable and rewarding. Working with industry and schools across Ireland to generate innovative and impactful ideas will help us achieve this, and inspire others to do the same.”

Ends...

Media Contact:

Andrew Shaw

Communications Manager

AbbVie

+353 (0) 87-7525-445

andrew.shaw@abbvie.com

Robert Love

Director of Communications

AbbVie

+ 353 (0) 87-8128-770

robert.a.love@abbvie.com

About AbbVie

Founded in 2013, AbbVie is a global, research-driven biopharmaceutical company committed to developing innovative advanced therapies for some of the world’s most complex and critical conditions. It employs more than 600 people at five manufacturing and commercial sites across Ireland. The company’s commercial headquarters is based in Dublin as is a separate international manufacturing and engineering services centre. AbbVie has two manufacturing plants in Sligo and one in Cork.

The company’s mission is to use its expertise, dedicated people and unique approach to innovation to markedly improve treatments across four primary therapeutic areas: immunology, oncology, virology and neuroscience. In more than 75 countries, AbbVie employees are working every day to advance health solutions for people around the world. For more information about AbbVie, please visit us at www.abbvie.com. Follow @abbvie on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn.