

I Wish Virtual Stem Event

Report by Orla Banville



On Thursday the 10th of February, TYs viewed the I Wish Virtual Stem Event. This event ran from 9am to 10.30 am and was broadcasted online and projected onto the whiteboards in our classrooms. I Wish is an initiative designed to inspire, encourage, and motivate young girls to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

I Wish originated in 2015, with one thousand female TY students attending the event in Cork City Hall. However, it has grown massively with over 16,000 female TY Students tuning into I Wish 2022. I Wish 2022 ran throughout the day on Thursday and included four separate sessions to accommodate the high demand. The event included over fifty role models in STEM who spoke about their careers and gave empowering messages.

Our session was opened by An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin who highlighted the importance of the event and why we need more females in STEM, now more than ever. Then we listened to a number of inspiring women in STEM from corporations such as Deloitte, PepsiCo, ARUP, Google, and Stryker. These women discussed their interest in STEM, the STEM subjects they studied in school and how STEM plays a role in their jobs. This opened our eyes to the vast career opportunities and success that STEM can offer.

The featured I Wish speaker of our session was European Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability, and Capital Markets Union, Mairead McGuinness. Prior to becoming a member of the European Commission, McGuinness had a successful career as a journalist and broadcaster. She was the first female graduate of University College Dublin's Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Economics.

McGuinness spoke about the underrepresentation of women in STEM areas, with women making up only 25% of the STEM workforce in Ireland. She discussed how harmful this can be as it leads to developments and innovations in all areas of society being catered for the male population only. Did you know that women are significantly more likely to be injured in car crashes because seatbelts are designed with the average male as the test height and weight?

McGuinness encouraged us to consider opportunities in STEM in the growing finance industry. In her own words she said, “follow your ambitions, your dreams, your hopes, whatever they may be.”

The event was concluded by I Wish co-founder Caroline O'Driscoll who spoke about her career and gave some encouraging advice. She spoke about the gender imbalance in STEM and the importance of us, as women getting involved in STEM and making change.

The opportunity to view this event was absolutely invaluable. At this point in our school career, many of us are thinking about what we wish to do in the future. I Wish 2022 was an excellent insight into the opportunities that are out there, and the words of encouragement were really empowering. I'm sure that even girls who have no interest in pursuing a career in STEM, would agree that the speakers and their respective journeys were really interesting, and it was inspiring to hear about all that they have achieved.

Thank you to Miss Zimmermann for getting us involved in I Wish 2022.