

Irish secondary school student top of the class in international science fair!

Irish secondary school student triumphs at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in Phoenix, Arizona.

Monday 16th May, 2016 – SciFest national champion, Louis Madden, a fifth year student from Largy College, Clones, Co. Monaghan, won two major awards at Intel ISEF 2016 which was held in Phoenix, Arizona last week. Louis secured his place at Intel ISEF when he won the top award at the SciFest 2015 national final last November with his project that looked at whether genetic testing and DNA research can be carried out simply, cheaply and efficiently. Intel ISEF is the world's largest international pre-college science competition, involving some 1,700 students from over 75 countries competing for a prize fund totalling \$4million. SciFest is a series of one-day science fairs, funded primarily by Science Foundation Ireland, Intel and Boston Scientific. SciFest first participated in Intel ISEF in 2012 and Louis' awards bring to seven the total number of awards won by SciFest students at this prestigious event.

Louis found that important genetic research was often limited by the cost of the necessary equipment. He spent just under €150 on cheap and recycled material to build several pieces of laboratory equipment including a vortex, centrifuge, PCR, transilluminator, gel box with power supply and gel camera. Using this equipment, he isolated and amplified chloroplast DNA. Comparing his results with those of other tests of the same material he demonstrated that genetic testing could be done in a simpler, cheaper and more effective manner.

Louis' Intel ISEF awards include a \$1,000 cash prize and the opportunity to participate in a three-week program of interdisciplinary scientific research for high school students and researchers in Trento, Italy, organised by the Bruno Kessler Foundation.

Speaking about this award, Louis said: *"I have had an incredible experience at Intel ISEF 2016, It was really brilliant to hear talks from world famous scientists and to see the projects that other students from around the world had submitted. It was great to spend a week exchanging ideas and discussing science. I'd like to thanks all my family and friends who supported me and SciFest, that gave me this opportunity."*

Sheila Porter, CEO, SciFest commented: *"We are all very proud of Louis and he is a great example of the high calibre of entries that SciFest attracts. His project demonstrates that great science is really about curiosity, exploration and having an inquisitive spirit. For Louis to represent Ireland at ISEF and to win two awards over other students from all over the world is an impressive achievement not only for him, his teacher and school but for Ireland too, and it demonstrates clearly that there is a very high standard of science being taught in Irish schools. It is important that we nourish this talent and further encourage the take-up of science in Irish schools by demonstrating that it is about active, inquiry-based learning and about investigating and solving everyday problems."*

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Notes to editor

A total of 15 SciFest@College science fairs have taken place over the past few weeks in the Institutes of Technology and DCU. The last event in this year's SciFest@College programme will take place in St Mary's College, Derry on 22 June.

This year's SciFest national final will take place in the Marino Conference Centre in Dublin on 11 November. The awards at that event will include the opportunity to represent Ireland at the Intel ISEF 2017 in Los Angeles.

SciFest is a series of one-day science fairs, funded primarily by Science Foundation Ireland, Intel and Boston Scientific. It is also supported by a number of other companies and organisations.