



## **Ireland's largest science competition for second level students officially launches for 2015**

**~ SciFest 2015 encouraging students to put their knowledge of science to the test! ~**

**16<sup>th</sup> February, 2015** – Students across the country are encouraged to enter SciFest 2015 and put their knowledge of science to the test. Now in its eighth year as a national project, SciFest is an all-inclusive, all-island science competition where second-level students showcase science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) projects at a series of one day science fairs held regionally in the 14 Institutes of Technology, DCU and St. Mary's College, Derry. The winners from each regional science fair go on to compete at a national final in November. The national final winner(s) of SciFest 2015 will be presented with a trophy and will represent Ireland at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) 2016 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Speaking at the launch of the 2015 competition in Dominican College, Taylor's Hill, Galway Sheila Porter, SciFest CEO said: *"2014 saw a record number of students and schools taking part in SciFest, with 6,059 students exhibiting 2,594 projects in schools and Institutes of Technology across the country. Each year, more and more students are entering SciFest, demonstrating their interest in STEM and adopting an inquiry-based approach to their learning, which is hugely positive. Through participation in SciFest students develop their creativity, team-work and problem-solving skills, all of which are transferable skills for later in their careers or academic life."*

The SciFest 2014 national final winner was 6th year student Christopher Carragher, from Our Lady's Secondary School, Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan, for his project Memory Buddy. Memory Buddy is a complete system designed and programmed by Christopher. Using Google Calendar the Memory Buddy can alert the person about appointments and medication via flashing lights, sound and also via the TV. It includes a remotely controlled medicine drawer that presents the

appropriate medicine at a particular time and there is a feedback facility that notifies a carer when medicine has or has not been taken. The system also includes an organiser that can be used to establish care rotas and appointments. He will represent Ireland at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) 2015 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Students wishing to follow in Christopher's footsteps can log on to the SciFest website ([www.scifest.ie](http://www.scifest.ie)) and download an entry form. Completed entry forms must be submitted by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

The aim of SciFest is to create a science fair experience that is inclusive, accessible and inspires excellence. It gives students of all levels the opportunity to develop research skills and associated skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, presentation skills and teamwork. SciFest provides students with an opportunity to study the STEM subjects in an interesting, innovative and hands-on way.

Outlining the commitment from Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in its continuing support of SciFest, Prof. Mark Ferguson, Director General, SFI and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government said: *"SFI Discover is delighted to support SciFest as it is vital that we engage and encourage our young people to increase their knowledge and interest in STEM. Initiatives like SciFest allow us to promote inquiry-based learning with our young people which is vitally important as we seek to build an innovative, knowledge-based economy that will continue to provide employment opportunities in the years to come."*

SciFest 2015 will see the introduction of a prestigious new award, the Boston Scientific Medical Devices Award, which will be presented at each of the 15 regional science fairs; the overall winner of this award will receive the inaugural Boston Scientific Medical Devices Trophy at the national final. Commenting on sponsoring the award, Elaine Boyd, Director Human Resources, Boston Scientific Galway said: *"We are delighted to sponsor the inaugural medical devices award and we are looking forward to seeing the innovative medical devices projects that students enter in SciFest 2015."*

Sarah Sexton, Head of STEM Programs at Intel Ireland said: *"Intel is delighted to once again support Scifest this year. We believe that the programme provides an important platform for young people right across Ireland to engage in scientific learning in an exciting and practical way."*

*Through participation at SciFest events students are developing the types of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, such as communication, creativity, problem solving and teamwork, that will be invaluable to them in our rapidly changing society, both now and in the future."*

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**For further information, please contact:**

Luke McDonnell/Morwenna Rice

Drury|Porter Novelli

01 2605000 / 085 7127243 (LMD) / 086 1940069 (MR)

**Notes to editor**

The closing date for entries from students is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March; entry forms can be downloaded from the SciFest website, [www.scifest.ie](http://www.scifest.ie), and completed forms should be sent to the students' chosen venue.

SciFest is a series of one day science fairs, funded primarily by Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) Discover programme, Intel and Boston Scientific. It is also supported by a number of other companies and organisations.

**Dates and venues for SciFest@College 2015**

<b>SciFest@College 2015</b>			
<b>DIT</b>	27-Mar	<b>Dundalk IT</b>	06-May
<b>Cork IT</b>	17-Apr	<b>IT Blanchardstown</b>	06-May
<b>Limerick IT</b>	28-Apr	<b>IT Tralee</b>	07-May
<b>Waterford IT</b>	29-Apr	<b>IT Tallaght</b>	12-May
<b>Athlone IT</b>	29-Apr	<b>IT Sligo</b>	13-May
<b>IT Carlow</b>	30-Apr	<b>Galway-Mayo IT</b>	14-May
<b>LIT Thurles</b>	30-Apr	<b>Letterkenny IT</b>	15-May
<b>DCU</b>	TBC	<b>SciFest@NorthWest (NI)</b>	12-Jun