

Model supports Girl Guides' body confidence campaign



Miss International Ireland Katherine Gannon with (l-r) Ellen McSweeney (10), Sarah Hudson (10), Niamh Kinsella (10)



ABOVE: Katherine Gannon with (l-r) Cressida Campion (14), and Emily-Ruth Brennan (14).

RIGHT: (l-r) Emily-Ruth Brennan (14), Alana McDonnell (13) and Ellie-Rose Cawley (13) of Griffen Valley Guides.



by Kate Donoghue

GRIFFEEN Valley Girl Guides completed a self-esteem programme which earned them the approval of Miss International Ireland, Katherine Gannon on 2nd February last.

The Lucan-based Girl-Guides finished the Free Being Me campaign, which is run by the Irish Girl Guides Association and focuses on boosting body-confidence for girls aged 7-14. Free Being Me teaches young people to value their bodies, stand up to social pressures and support others in their body confidence as well.

Katherine Gannon is a model from Galway who helped out with the campaign, passing on valuable insight she has gained in her industry.

In the workshop, the girls

learned about photoshopping and airbrushing. This taught them that manipulated images are not realistic beauty standards.

For years, Gannon herself felt that she couldn't go without makeup but since being "stripped" of all makeup on a reality TV show Fashion Hero last Autumn, she often happily goes without it.

Gannon's message for the girls was that "health and happiness are more important than looks".

"If you don't have health and you don't have happiness then you don't have anything."

The Griffen girls took a lot from the experience.

Emily-Ruth Brennan, aged 14, said she learned that "you don't have to be perfect for anyone".

"You don't have to go starving

yourself or go to extreme lengths to look perfect. You're just fine being yourself."

In the age of social media, Free Being Me helps teenagers who feel under pressure to meet certain standards.

"You shouldn't worry about how you look; as long as what is on the inside is nice, that is what matters," said Ellie-Rose Cawley, aged 13.

Alana McDonnell, who is also aged 13, learned that everyone has their own hang-ups:

"Free Being Me gave me more confidence and I know that it helped lots of other girls in the Guide unit too," she said.

Gannon liked that the campaign was about sharing a "healthy, positive message that promotes positive thinking".

"My message to girls and young women is to never go down a road that is unhealthy."

Commitment given that KBC jobs in Maynooth are secure

by Laura Mc Loughlin

A COMMITMENT that jobs at the KBC Bank in Manor Mills in Maynooth are secure has been welcomed by James Lawless TD (FF).

Deputy Lawless was speaking after the announcement on Monday (13th February) that KBC Bank will remain in the Irish market going forward with Ireland being one of the Belgian company's six core countries.

"Not only does the news come as a relief to around 1,000 employees of KBC Bank, it is also very positive news for Irish consumers," said Deputy Lawless.

"In particular this is welcome news for the staff and customers of both the Naas and Maynooth branches.

"The Irish banking market could have ill afforded the loss of another market player.

"KBC Bank provides vital competition to the pillar banks of AIB and Bank of Ireland, and also to Ulster Bank and Permanent TSB.

"Hopefully KBC's renewed commitment to Ireland will actually help to stiffen competition in the marketplace for the benefit of consumers."

KBC Bank opened a new retail banking hub in Maynooth in August 2014.

"The CEO's commitment to continue to invest in Ireland is especially welcome," continued Deputy

Lawless.

"KBC's recent financial reports suggest that their Irish operation is significantly profitable, and that they continue to increase their number of customers.

"The announcement of mortgage rate cuts by KBC last October means the bank is well placed to benefit from the increasing number of mortgage applications in

Ireland and the bank's commitment to SMEs is welcome news.

"I note that the bank's CEO has confirmed that the bank has some customers affected by the tracker mortgage scandal.

"KBC needs to ensure that all customers who were wrongly denied a tracker mortgage rate or who were put on the wrong rate are looked after as a priority."

Almost 13% more vacant business premises now than previous year

by Bairbre Ni Bhraonáin

THERE was a 12.9% rise in the number of commercial properties listed as vacant in Kildare in the last quarter of 2016, according to GeoDirectory's latest statistics. The new figures represent a jump of 1% on those of recorded at the same time the previous year.

The Kildare towns featured in the report were Celbridge (10.4%), Leixlip (10.4%), Maynooth (8.7%) Naas (15%) and Newbridge (15%).

The good news is, however, that Kildare is still well below the national average for commercial vacancies. Nationally, the figure increased over the year from 12.6% to 13.5%.

According to the GeoDirectory database, of 213,666 commercial address points listed in Ireland, 28,796 of those properties are now lying idle. The data indicates, not only a substantial disuse of commercial building stock across the country, but also in Dublin.

A significant finding from the analysis was that west coast counties performed poorer than their eastern counterparts, with Sligo (18%), Leitrim (16.4%), Donegal, Mayo (15.6% each), Galway (15.4%) and Limerick (15.3%) having the six highest vacancy rates in the country.

The latest analysis focused on 101 locations, (79 towns across the four provinces as well as 22 Dublin districts). The results found that Edenderry, County Offaly had the highest vacancy rate (31%).



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