

News

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GENDER EQUALITY

So why do fewer women make it to the top?

by Brian McLaughlin
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RESEARCH is under way at University of Limerick to find out why women are under-represented in senior positions in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The research is being conducted by Research Fellow Dr Clare O'Hagan who revealed to Limerick Post that UL has been selected as the only Irish university to participate in the EU funded Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia (FESTA) initiative.

IN NUMBERS...

15 per cent

target for women at senior lecturer level at UL set in 2007

26 per cent

proportion of women at senior lecturer level achieved in 2012

37 PER CENT

target for women at lecturer level at UL set in 2007

48 per cent

proportion of women at lecturer level achieved in 2012

It's a five-year project and it should be showing results next year. With a background in human resources, business management, teaching and sociology, Dr O'Hagan said: "Gender equality is very close to my heart".

UL has had a long history of commitment to equality and diversity and has the highest percentage of women at full professorial level in



Briefing EU Affairs Minister Lucinda Creighton on the UL research project were (from left) Dr Clare O'Hagan, research fellow UL; Dr Ita Richardson, principal investigator Irish Software Engineering Research Centre; Prof. Don Barry, president UL; Minister Creighton; Prof. Pat O'Connor, principal investigator FESTA; Tommy Foy, director Human Resources UL and Caroline Neylon, HR Officer, Research UL

any Irish university. Higher Education Authority (HEA) figures show that while women constitute 18 percent of those at full professorial level in Irish universities, UL has almost twice that proportion at 34 per cent.

Dr O'Hagan pointed out that the University of Limerick's track record in promoting gender equality has been facilitated by the support of Atlantic Philanthropies and Science Foundation Ireland.

"In 2007, UL set targets for female representations which it has exceeded. The target for the proportion of women at senior lecturer or above was set at 15 percent and 26 per cent has been achieved while a target of 37 per cent was set for the proportion of women at lecturer level and 48 per cent has been achieved.

"However, women are still under-represented

in senior positions in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) disciplines. In these areas, women make up only 10 per cent of those at senior lecturer or above and only 22 per cent of those at lecturer level.

"This is not unique to University of Limerick, but is a worldwide phenomenon and this is now receiving attention at United Nations level," said Dr O'Hagan.

She said the research will examine the reasons for women's under-representation at senior level by examining the working environment of academics and researchers in science, engineering and technology related disciplines.

Dr O'Hagan is convinced that the FESTA initiative will ultimately lead to a greater diversity, creativity and innovation as well as attracting more female students to science, engineering and technology at UL.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Abuse safeguard

■ LIMERICK Fine Gael TD Patrick O'Donovan, has urged the Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald to examine a new child protection system in the UK that uses online technology to make it easier for A&E doctors to identify child abuse. Explaining the system, Deputy O'Donovan said that children who visits an A&E unit or have out of hours GP care are logged on a national database, to make it easier for doctors to spot instances of child abuse.

Adare upgrade

■ TRANSPORT Minister Leo Varadkar has approved funding of €35,000 for improvement works on regional and local roads in Adare. The works, funded under the Low Cost Safety Improvement Works schemes, will be carried out at Normoyle's Cross, Castleroberts, Adare. The proposed scheme will include traffic calming measures at the junction in question, and approaching roads. Local TD Dan Neville said there was a need for enhanced warning signage and traffic calming at the junction and on approach. He said he had received numerous representations from constituents over the last 18 months regarding the safety issues involved.

Catch a pike

■ A PIKE fishing competition to raise funds for the Corbett Search and Response Suicide Prevention patrol will be held this Sunday, February 3.

Contestants should meet at the Maxol Petrol Station at Griffin's Cross, Corbally Road between 8.30am and 9am. Lots of spot prizes promised and a fun day fishing. The cost for adults is €10 and a child fee is €5. Contact Paul on 087-2725743

Reaching out

■ LIMERICK people with an interest in their community, history, tourism or genealogy are encouraged to volunteer with the national 'reverse' genealogy programme Ireland Reaching Out. The main aim of the project is to assist members of the Irish diaspora in tracing their ancestors.

The Ireland Reaching Out website www.irelandxo.com is proving increasingly popular as a landing point for people abroad who have some detail about where their emigrant ancestors hail from in Ireland. By joining any parish community online, they can seek direct research assistance from local people who also volunteer to meet them on their arrival.

BANKRUPTCY

Blast from the past as Atari hits the headlines

by Brian McLaughlin
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AN AIR of industrial nostalgia returned to Limerick last week with the announcement that video games maker Atari has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the US in an attempt to separate it from its French parent company.

Atari is one of the world's oldest

video games companies founded 40 years ago and had some of the most famous names from the early days of video games in the 1970s.

Backed by the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), it had its European headquarters in the Raheen Industrial Estate and also had a plant in Tipperary Town. The company started production in 1982 and closed in 1985.

At its peak, the Irish operation employed several hundred people and its acquisition at the time was regarded as a coup for the IDA. In its early days, Atari was compared to Willie Wonka's legendary chocolate factory with all sorts of magical

games converting into the sale of several million consoles and games.

Then came what was called 'The North American Video Games Crash' in 1983 and Atari changed hands several times. Steve Jobs, the late chief executive of Apple, was an early employee.

The company's fortunes have been improving lately and if its Chapter 11 efforts are successful and a new buyer can be found, it could make a comeback to the market. The company only has 40 employees today.

The parent company, France's Infogrames Entertainment, first took a stake in Atari in 2000 and after

acquiring the remaining stake in 2008, changed its name to Atari SA.

The U.S. subsidiary said it was filing bankruptcy procedures to protect the company and its shareholders. The move will allow for a sale of assets so it can continue to grow the business.

The company revealed that its U.S. business and three other companies Atari Interactive, Humongous and California U.S. Holdings are expected to sell all their assets in the next 120 days.

The Atari brand is best known for console games such as Atari 2600 and video games like Pong, Asteroids and Centipede.

News

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Great Limerick Run

■ ANYONE wishing to avail of the early discount price for entry to the Great Limerick Run is advised to register online before this Friday February 1. This year's event will incorporate a Children's Run, which will see three races of two miles (8-12 years) and one kilometre (4-7 years) at UL. There will also be an event on the track for wheelchair-bound children. Over 50 teams have already registered for the marathon relay team event, with a maximum of 200 teams allocated for the race. The relay allows up to four people to team up and share the marathon distance.

ICTU march

■ LIMERICK city councillors have given their support to an anti-austerity march planned by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions for the city next month. Cllr Maurice Quinlivan (SF) proposed that the council should endorse the protest on February 9. Cllr Diarmuid Scully asked if the protest could be rescheduled for the following day to avoid disruption to Saturday trade but he was told by Cllr Quinlivan that it would boost trade in the city centre. The march will start from the Mechanics Institute at 2pm and buses will bring protestors from west Limerick. Contact Bill Blair on 086-0768979.

Private roads

■ TRANSPORT Minister Leo Varadkar will permit local authorities to use up to 7 per cent of their annual discretionary roads allocation on local improvement schemes which will go towards the upkeep of private roads in rural areas. Local improvement schemes are government-funded programmes for the maintenance of private roads in rural areas that are not maintained on an ongoing basis by County Councils.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

James aims for gold at Special Winter Olympics

A CORBALLY athlete is representing Ireland at the 2013 Special Olympics World Winter Games in South Korea.

James Murphy, who attends the Daughters of Charity Service in Lisnagry, flew from Dublin last Friday with 13 other entrants, their management team and medical personnel.

James will take part in the floor ball event, which is similar to indoor hockey, along with seven other Irish athletes. Six of team Ireland's members will compete in the Alpine skiing category.

He was a member of the the 2010 Irish

basketball team that won gold at a European Special Olympics event in Austria.

When he is not busy training, James enjoys listening to music and watching the Irish football and rugby teams in action. Paul O'Connell is his sporting hero.

The Games will feature more than 3,000 Special Olympics athletes from more than 100 countries who will compete in seven Olympic-type sports: alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, short track speed skating, figure skating, floor hockey and floorball.

The games run until February 5.



Team Ireland Special Olympics Floorball coaches Paul O' Callaghan, from Bandon and Martin O' Leary, from Kinsale, right, with athlete James Murphy

Rathkeale man's extradition sought over rhino horn theft

A TRAVELLER from Rathkeale appeared before the High Court last week on a European arrest warrant relating to the theft of rhino horns in Vienna last summer.

Austrian prosecutors investigating the theft of the horns, estimated to be worth €300,000 on the black market, are seeking the extradition of John Quilligan (31) of Roches Road in Rathkeale to face related criminal charges.

The Austrian authorities requested Garda assistance in tracking Mr Quilligan, after a number of arrests following the theft of the rhino horns from a museum and an antique dealer. He was arrested at a Garda

checkpoint in Swords last Wednesday January 23 and appeared before the High Court where he was released on bail on condition he surrender his passport.

He is the second Limerick man to be detained on a European arrest warrant relating to the theft of rhino horn.

Last October, Michael Kealy of Abbeylands, Askeaton, was arrested in Kilkenny after British police sought his extradition in connection with the theft of a €200,000 rhino horn.

The trade in mature rhino horn is now considered more lucrative than the drug trade, with an average 4kg horn being sold for up to €50,000 per kilo.



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