

# Girls discovering future in science thanks to project

**SCHOOLGIRLS from across Swansea have swapped school coats for lab coats after taking part in a new science scheme.**

The 20 year nine pupils have just completed a six-week workshop which aims to get more girls involved in science and engineering and hopefully inspire them to consider a career in the profession.

The Discover Club was organised by Careers Wales West, with the support of WISE (Women into Science, Engineering and Construction) and Swansea University and was overseen by Dr Victoria Hobson, a marine biologist at the university.

She said: "Every week the girls had a different researcher or speaker to try and inspire them to get involved with science or engineering. The course is designed to show the girls there are

BY ROB GOODMAN

many ways science can be used. We wanted to show pupils science is fun and exciting and more than the traditional stereotype of working out equations or doing experiments in a laboratory."

During the six weeks, the girls were given talks on glaciers, DNA, structural engineering, wildlife monitoring and even built a rocket, which they launched from the grounds of the university.

Dr Hobson added: "The workshops have been very successful and the girls have loved being involved in it.

"I am not sure why a lot of girls do not pick science at school.

"A lot of them are interested in the arts and drama I suppose but if you show people what careers they can do then they can be inspired to carry on

with it. It is the third year we have done something like this and it is a good thing Swansea University is involved with it.

"We want children to realise there are careers in engineering and you don't have to be a geek in a white coat."

In January, a report from the enterprise and learning committee at the National Assembly said more needed to be done to make science subjects more appealing to teenagers.

The report found that in 2008 just 22 per cent of A level physics students were girls.

Ray Collier, chief executive of Careers Wales West, said: "Holding events like The Discover Club is a fundamental part of what we do to help inspire school pupils into science and engineering-based careers.

"The Discover Club events played an important role in engaging females in science, technology, engineering and maths.

"With fewer girls taking these subjects at A level, this Saturday club was an excellent way to demonstrate the vast career opportunities available to pupils in these sectors.

"Our partnership with WISE and Swansea University means that we are able to set up worthwhile links with lecturers and people who are already working in those industries, giving pupils hands on experiences in the main science and technology sectors," he said.

To promote science, Careers Wales West is hosting a careers event at the National Waterfront Museum in July.

Big Bang Cymru is designed to encourage youngsters to look at science-based careers.

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## Drop stigma as we all might suffer

**Rosita Wilkins**



MAJOR research has shown that one in four people suffer from mental illness during their lives; also one of the major causes for long term sickness is depression. Why, then, is mental illness still so stigmatised and why do so many people still misunderstand it. Usually the popular media give a negative impression of mental illness and like other "unseen" disabilities or differences is less easy to comprehend.

When I was in hospital, ten years ago, writing to my family and friends one of the nurses remarked "You're not going to tell people where you are, are you? You are brave!" I thought, that's really weird. She wouldn't say that if I had a broken leg. So why should a person be ashamed about something that they cannot help?

A disability or illness that cannot be seen it is just as real as any other. Sometimes it is difficult to understand

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