

Press Release

15 November 2013

## Have you got the guts for Alimentary Adventures?

- **Discover how your digestive system works from top to bottom with an exciting new Alimentary Adventures inflatable exhibit being launched at Discovery in Cork City Hall this weekend**

Do you know how your digestive system works? Why not explore the ***Alimentary Adventures***, an exciting new inflatable 8m long walk-through tunnel, which mimics the human digestive system. Guests (young and old) will be able to follow the journey that food takes all the way from the mouth through the digestive system. And what better way to learn about the digestive system, than to get up close and personal with it!

Visitors enter ***Alimentary Adventures*** through the mouth where they will hear and see the first stages of digestion - the mechanical and chemical breakdown of the food - they'll see teeth, they'll see the glands where saliva is made, and they can peek upwards to the brain which controls the whole process. They will also hear the sounds of food being chewed as they pass through the mouth area! Guests will then gaze at the oesophagus which leads to the stomach where digestion continues, and if anyone has an ulcer, they might be interested in meeting the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* which can cause ulcers. They will be able to look out through the stomach wall at other organs which help to break down our food, such as the liver, gall bladder and pancreas which all secrete chemicals to promote digestion.

Visitors will walk on through the convoluted small intestine where digestion is completed, and where nutrient absorption takes place through the highly folded finger-like "villi" (children will not be able to resist poking at these projections, all adding to this exciting experience). In the large intestine, where water is absorbed, they will meet the trillions of bacteria living there and see the appendix, and can also see some signs of gastrointestinal disease, such as colitis or pre-cancerous polyps.

***Alimentary Adventures*** was developed by the ***Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre*** (APC; <http://apc.ucc.ie>) with funding from Science Foundation Ireland's ***Discover*** programme (<http://www.sfi.ie/discover-science-engineering-dse/>) for **Science Week 2013** ([www.scienceweek.ie](http://www.scienceweek.ie)). Science Week 2013, 10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2013, is 'Exploring the XTRA-Ordinary' and inviting the nation to go behind the scenes of everyday life and Explore the XTRA-Ordinary processes that are taking place in front of our own eyes! The new exhibit is being launched at Discovery, Cork's interactive Science Exhibition in Cork City Hall which is open to the public this weekend on Saturday and Sunday 16-17 November from 2-6pm.

***“Alimentary Adventures*** gives the public a first-hand experience of how food travels through, and nourishes the body, and also allows them to engage with the important research undertaken at the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre” said Mr Séan Sherlock TD, Minister for Research and Innovation.

***“Alimentary Adventures*** is a highly visual and tactile experience which will greatly enhance the engagement of the Irish public with science” added Professor Mark Ferguson, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government.

***Alimentary Adventures*** aims to increase public interest in and awareness of all things gastrointestinal – digestion, microbiota, healthy eating and lifestyle as well as increasing appreciation and knowledge of biology, nutrition and health.

The ***Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre*** is a national research centre for food and medicine which received €50m funding from government and industry through Science Foundation Ireland’s Research Centres’ Programme.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

The ***Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre*** is a national research centre for food and medicine which received €50m funding from government and industry through Science Foundation Ireland’s Research Centres’ Programme. The APC, founded in 2003, spans across UCC, Teagasc (Ireland’s Agriculture & Food Development Authority) and Cork Institute of Technology. APC’s research explores how bacteria in the human gut impact on population health, leading to the development of future foods and medicines.

The people:

- **Marc McCarthy** is the High Throughput Robotics Specialist and Research Officer in the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre and is an active member of the education and outreach team for several years and was awarded APC Education and Outreach Person of the Year (2013). Marc has spearheaded APC social media and YouTube presences, providing IT and graphic design for APC events e.g. The Experience of Illness, Science for All, Science Raps and a key member in the development and delivery of many APC outreach initiatives, including collaboration with UCC’s Multimedia students to develop ios Apps for the APC. He is widely experienced in a number of different areas of science, with a degree in Food Science & Technology and a Masters in Public Health and Epidemiology, both from UCC. He has trained as part of the Explorers Education Programme with the Marine Institute, Galway, and been involved in the running of science summer camps in both UCC and the LifetimeLab. Marc has over ten years’ experience as a DJ in Cork, with experience on

campus and local radio stations, an array of local and national public events and a number of club nights under his belt. Marc and has been involved in the organisation of the Science Raps competition since 2009 as well as the APC Droppin' Science @ The Culture Club (DCOS Public Engagement Programme/ESOF 2012) and Rapping Science with APC & Stevie G (CuriousCity/DCOS Public Engagement Programme).

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- Dr **Catherine Buckley** is Communications and Outreach Manager of the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre. Catherine has BSc and PhD degrees in Biochemistry as well as a HDip in Education from University College Cork. She has managed the APC's innovative and imaginative education and outreach programme since its inception 10 years ago including initiatives such as *MicrobeMagic@School*, APC's primary school programme, which has provided school visits for more than 40,000 children and supported teachers through providing interactive presentations about the human digestive, immune and circulatory systems and the APC's childrens' website <http://microbemagic.ucc.ie>, *Budding Biologists*, APC's programme for secondary schools which includes a very popular weeklong transition year Experience programme), lab workshops, Munster region of Debating Science Issues competition and school talks, Science for All, a competition organised with UCC College of Science Engineering & Food Science, Industry Conferences, Public fora and Patient Open Days including The Experience of Illness: Learning from the Arts (2012).

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### **About Science Week**

Co-ordinated by Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) Discover Programme, **Science Week** is a collaboration of events run by colleges, schools, libraries, teachers, researchers and students throughout Ireland. **Science Week 2013** is calling on the public to go 'behind the scenes' of everyday life and **Explore the XTRA-Ordinary** processes that are taking place in front of our own eyes!

With over 750 events registered on [www.scienceweek.ie](http://www.scienceweek.ie) "**Science Week 2013: Exploring the XTRA-Ordinary**" is inviting the nation to participate in some of the **XTRA-Ordinary** events taking place near you!