

Every day seemed endless. The whole of Christmas was spent in dread. Every time I went to the bathroom, I expected the worst. Every cramp seemed a manifestation of something sinister. It wasn't until I reached eight weeks and had an early scan that we had any sense of hope. I will never forget the panic when the screen was switched on, I couldn't even look until the doctor said "There we are, there's your little baby, heart beating away. We looked in disbelief at the screen and prayed harder than we had ever prayed in our lives just willing that little baby to hold on and cling to life. Every step of the way we prayed and hoped. March came and finally the day that our first lost baby was due. It was difficult, we stood and looked at the rose bush we had planted in the garden and at the two white angels we had placed at its base. What makes a pregnancy so difficult after a miscarriage is that constant fear that you have. Whereas previously each new step like growing out of normal clothes with a bulging bump and those first butterfly movements were greeted with excitement, now everything seemed changed and punctuated with fear that things couldn't ever be right again.

But they were. As I went into labour on 21st August, I was still fearful, no amount of scans, no amount of listening to the baby's heart-beat gave me reassurance. Finally just before midnight Kate was delivered into my arms and into our hearts. For the first time in over a year my husband and I actually breathed. As we looked at her we cried, tears of happiness and tears of grief: happiness at the joy of welcoming her into our lives and into our family but tears of grief at the loss of the two little lives that made way for her. She will forever have two little angels perched on her shoulders and I will always consider myself a mother of seven, not five.

I would like everyone who is considering being brave enough to try again for a baby after a miscarriage to know that there is hope. Good things do happen. Last Christmas I could never have envisaged true happiness again. I could never see myself holding another baby. This Christmas will be different. God bless you all who are struggling with the loss of your babies. I wish you all whatever you wish for and need for yourselves. Don't lose hope.

In Memory of Donegan Babies, lost 3/9/06 & 24/11/06

Annual Service of Remembrance

St. Theresa's Church,

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland uses the symbol of the tree losing one leaf to represent the loss of a baby through miscarriage. On this cold autumn Sunday, when outside trees were shedding their leaves, within St Theresa's Church on Donore Avenue the Miscarriage Association of Ireland tried to offer some support to those who had lost babies through miscarriage. As each person entered the Church they were handed a white candle for each child lost. They were also handed a missalette upon which Denise Shaw's poignant poem "The Whole of the Tree" was printed.

For the many of us who have lost parents and siblings, our grief was publicly expressed at removals and funerals. However, not all of us who have suffered miscarriage have had the opportunity afforded to us of openly grieving our loss. This yearly service is our way of remembering our precious babies and finding some comfort in the fact that we are not alone.

The Service Celebrants were Fr. Sean Mc Ardle and the Rev. Sonia Hicks who gave a truly moving homily. The candle of light procession during the service, whereby each lost baby was represented by the lighted candles, accompanied by the gentle guitar playing of Philip Lawson offered great comfort to all who attended.

As each family made their way back from the altar they were handed a gift of a Newbridge Silverware photoframe. Again the symbol of the tree was used as the photoframe was in the form of a small tree and inside the frame was the symbol of the Miscarriage Association. St. Mary's Folk Group from Lucan provided music and songs throughout the Service contributing greatly to the occasion.

After the Service all participants were invited to refreshments at the back of the Church. The Books of Remembrance were available to be signed or simply looked at by those who had signed previously. The Service was a great success. Special thanks much go to Angela Grace and Mary Lawson for all their hard work in organising the service and to all family and friends who took part in this wonderful annual event.

Marie McManus

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM took place on Thursday 5th June 2008 in Buswells Hotel. This is an opportunity to find out what happens during the year and also an opportunity to be involved in plans for the year ahead. We are delighted to welcome four new Committee Members - Helen Groves, Jennifer Ryan, Deirdre Phelan and Avril Martin. Their expertise is in Ectopic Pregnancy. Already they have gathered valuable information and continue their research into this very emotive and distressing issue. We are also delighted to report that the current committee members have agreed to continue their valuable work. We would like to extend our congratulations to Angela Grace, our Treasurer, on the birth of her beautiful baby daughter Sinead who was born in February. Thankfully, Angela has agreed to continue the role of Treasurer, supported by Mary Lawson, who is Acting -Treasurer until Angela gets more in control!



The Miscarriage Association
of Ireland

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Registered Charity Number: CHY 9738.

Newsletter

Summer 2008

Annual Service of Remembrance 20 years!

Sun 9th November 2008

Our Service of Remembrance is a very special occasion and a chance to share an experience with others who have suffered the loss of a child. It is a time to remember and if possible come to terms with our own personal loss. It is also a time to recognise that for a time, however short; we had the privilege of sharing a relationship with our child. This little life had a meaning and it is necessary for us to give attention to this existence. We may not always understand the "why" but for those of us who have been able to move on, I believe that our lives have been enriched by this painful but hugely significant time of our life.

This year, our Service will be on Sunday, 9th November 2008 at 3pm. We extend a very warm welcome to you all and would suggest that you make a note of this date in your diary. It is our greatest wish to fill St. Teresa's Church. It is our intention to light a candle for all the babies who have gone before us. Please help us to fulfill this wish particularly this year, which marks our 20th Anniversary. The Miscarriage Association of Ireland was established in September 1988 by Hilary Frazer and Stephanie Blandford (see website "about us" www.miscarriage.ie). Please come along and invite your family and friends to join you. Everybody is welcome.

June O'Toole

Welcome - A Word from the Chairperson

Hello again and welcome to the Summer edition of our Newsletter, which is rather late due to demands, both personal and professional in nature. Apologies if you have been wondering where we have gotten to and "No" we haven't forgotten about you! Always remember that no matter what "you are not alone!" We are here to support each other.

The Miscarriage Association exists to help those who have been plunged into a personal "winter" by miscarriage. We are there to help them move out of the darkness and see the sunshine again! We cannot take away all their sadness but we can offer hope and support. The words on one of our Bookmarks come to mind: "All clouds allow the sun shine through but in its own time." It's hard at times, to believe that you will ever get back into that "happy place" but you must remember never to give up on hope!

I would like to say a very big Thank You to our Committee members for all their hard work, effort and enthusiasm. Their dedication and compassion is only surpassed by their friendship and support. We have been together through the sad times. We have learned to accept life and its "ups and downs." Together, we celebrate the good times! We're quite a unique group, coming from all different paths of life but with something very special in common. It's a privilege to share life's journey with such special people.

I would also like to add a very special Thank You to Michele Turner who set up and continues to man our website. This has proved to be an invaluable resource.

To all our members, on behalf of your Committee, I would like to wish you joy, peace, hope and plenty of "sunshine" in the days ahead.

June O'Toole

Goodbye Irene

We would like to take this opportunity to say a very big thank you to Irene Roche for her commitment to the Miscarriage Association of Ireland over the past nine years and particularly over the last two, when she worked tirelessly as a committee member.

Irene has also been a wonderful friend to us all and we will miss her, particularly for her fun and sense of humour. Irene has to step down from the committee due to personal commitments but we know that she will only be a telephone call away. Thank you Irene for all your hard work and I'm sure that your family in particular will benefit from seeing more of you!

June O'Toole on behalf of the Committee

Ectopic Pregnancy sub-group

We are delighted to welcome on board four new members with experience of Ectopic

Pregnancy. The following will give you a clearer picture:

Who Are We?

We are a group of four women from Ireland who have all suffered from an ectopic pregnancy over recent years and who feel that information, awareness and support is grossly lacking in Ireland today. We have been so encouraged by the Miscarriage Association’s willingness to invite us on board their committee to actively begin raising this awareness and providing this support.

Why are we doing this?

Ectopic pregnancy is frequently misdiagnosed and if left untreated, an ectopic pregnancy is life threatening. Through the Miscarriage Association, we hope to offer help and support to those who are affected by ectopic pregnancy. We also aim to raise awareness of ectopic pregnancy in Ireland. We often hear from women who presented to their maternity hospital with symptoms of varying degrees and were sent home and told not to worry. More often than not, these women ended up having life saving surgery.

What are the facts?

- An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy which implants outside the uterus.
- The most common site for ectopic pregnancy implantation is in the fallopian tube. As the pregnancy grows and enlarges it causes pain and bleeding and in extreme cases, the tube can rupture and cause internal haemorrhaging, thus affecting future fertility.
- Most ectopic pregnancies are diagnosed within the first 8 weeks of pregnancy.
- 1 in every 80 pregnancies will be an ectopic pregnancy.
- Approximately 5 women per year die of an ectopic pregnancy in the UK.

Why do we feel so strongly?

Women often leave hospital following surgery or non surgical treatment using the drug methotrexate, with little information as to what has happened to them. They leave without their baby, with a question mark over future fertility, often with the loss of all natural fertility and a lot of unanswered questions. They have received the necessary medical care yet they will require much emotional support as they recover and try to come to terms with what has happened to them.

Our Main Aims over the next few months are to:

- Raise awareness to the general public, through magazines, newspapers, and general media and partaking in charity events.
- As part of the Miscarriage Association, to provide telephone support to women and their partners who are affected by ectopic pregnancy and through the monthly support group meetings.
- Ensure all women presenting with an ectopic pregnancy are fully aware of all treatment options open to them.
- Raise funds through sponsored events, coffee mornings, donations, marathons etc.
- Produce leaflets to distribute to hospitals so all women leaving hospital have some information and a support number to contact someone. We would also like to see more information on the condition available in GP surgeries.

We would like to thank all those who have provided us with the necessary support to pursue this venture, in particular the committee members of the Miscarriage Association, whom we very much look forward to working with.

If you have suffered from an ectopic pregnancy and would like to share your experience with someone in a similar situation, please do not hesitate to contact us via the Miscarriage Association.

Deirdre Phelan, Helen Groves, Jennifer Ryan and Avril Martin.

Aer Lingus Cabin Crew Ball.

The annual Aer Lingus Cabin Crew Ball is a Christmas Party with a twist. When the good people of Aer Lingus organise their Christmas night out, they combine a fun night with the raising of money for some worthy charity. In November 2007, thanks to Ciara Power and her two friends Michelle and Louise the lucky beneficiary of this generosity was the Miscarriage Association of Ireland.

Flora Women’s Mini Marathon

We would like to thank all those who supported the Miscarriage Association of Ireland in the Flora Women’s Mini Marathon which took place on Monday 2nd June, particularly those of you who actively participated on our behalf.

Welcome Babies

Baby Joshua William Dunlea, born on Monday 12th November 2007 to Margaret and Damian – a new baby brother for Elizabeth.

Baby Sinead Frances Grace, born on 19th February 2008, a beautiful daughter for Angela and Michael and a baby sister for big brother, Andrew.

Baby Jack Carroll, born in April 2008, a little son and a dream come true for Blaitin and Jamie.

Twin babies Fionn and Theo McDonagh, born on 11th June 2008, two beautiful sons and a dream come true for Linda and Dave.

Baby Thomas Patrick, born 8th November 2007 to Sharon and John.

Sad Farewells

We remember and acknowledge all those babies who have been lost to us, with whom for a time, however short; we had the privilege of sharing a very special relationship.

Remembering Holly

In memory of our precious baby Holly Jackman, sadly lost on 4th January 2007. Due date 12th July 2007. Holly, you will never be forgotten. You brought us a lot of happiness during the short time that you were with us. You are always in our hearts. Love Mammy and Daddy.

On 29th November last we dressed ourselves up to the nines and headed for the new swanky Carlton Hotel on the Old Airport Road. It was a damp winter’s night but inside the hotel there was plenty of Christmas cheer. A champagne reception was held early on in the evening and photographers were present from Social and Personal magazine to record this fashionable social event.

At 8 o'clock we were requested to take our seats for our meal. On each table was a printout of Denise Shaw's poignant poem "The Whole of The Tree." After dinner the MAI Chairperson, June O'Toole, said a few words about the Association and the invaluable work that it does.

A band brought everyone to the dance floor and was followed later on by a disco. It was a brilliant night but the highlight was that 2,300 was raised for the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. Ciara, Michelle and Louise certainly know how to throw a party and we thank them wholeheartedly.

Marie McManus

Dell Computers

We extend our gratitude to the staff of Dell Computers, who raised 1,000 for the Miscarriage Association by running a “Fuse-Ball Tournament”.

Mary Lawson

In Memory of Baby Alice

We were very grateful to accept a 500 donation from Helen and Tony McGrath in memory of Baby Alice. At their request this money will go towards providing counselling services for couples dealing with miscarriage.

Yvonne Shiels

Website

www.miscarriage.ie is there for you and offers help, information and contact details. It keeps you up to date on all the latest news and events. It is proving to be a tremendous point of contact and a great resource.

A Personal Story

In June 2006, I discovered that I was pregnant. I felt all the feelings that you would expect to feel when you had planned to open your heart and welcome a child into the world; excitement, anticipation, nervousness and happiness. My husband was ecstatic as were my other children and so began the discussions about the new arrival. The date was significant as the baby was due the day after my eldest son’s tenth birthday. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and looking back now, I realised that I knew all along that something was just not right. However, unwilling to go with my instincts and in denial I went along with the family discussions; would my daughter finally get a sister after three much-loved, but noisy brothers.

But finally eleven weeks into my pregnancy and as I waned at my brave four year old on his first day of school, I began to bleed. I phoned the hospital on Friday evening only to be told, “There’s nothing we can do for you, rest and come in on Monday morning”. I stayed at home, but only lasted until Sunday morning when I gave in and turned up at the emergency room. I was lucky, I was seen straight away. I will never forget when the screen was switched on as the doctor put the scanner onto my tummy. There was silence. I knew what she knew. She muttered something about “unsustained pregnancy”. I didn’t really hear anything else. The next thing I knew, I was taken to theatre for an ERPC or evacuation of Retained Products of Conception. What a horrible name, this “Products of Conception” was our baby, a brother or sister for my other children, not just a product, something to be eradicated in a cold, sterile operating theatre. But somehow we got through that day. I never knew it was possible to cry so much. I cried for my husband, for my kids, but most of all for my little lost baby who would never know how much she or he was wanted and loved. People tried to be kind, but we found it very difficult when we were told to just be grateful for what we had and that we were lucky people. Of course we knew we were lucky. As I’ve kissed the sleepy heads of my children every night I have thanked God for allowing me to care for them but the flip-side was that we knew what our baby would look like, we knew what we were missing. People have different ways of coping. I thought I’d never get back to the hospital so I could find out when we could try again. My doctor said there was no known reason for the miscarriage and to go ahead as soon as we felt ready.

Ten weeks later, I was pregnant again. I was cautious when I had a positive test and we kept the news to ourselves. Our happiness was short-lived. Only one week after the positive test, I began to bleed. Once again, we headed to the emergency room. This time, I wasn’t seen quickly and was advised by a midwife to “just go home and get on with it” The “it” being my miscarriage. A blood test the following week showed that I had a “biochemical pregnancy” that hadn’t implanted. We were devastated: another lost baby to us. It didn’t matter that a little heart hadn’t even had the chance to beat. I think to most couples as soon as you have a positive test, in your mind, you have a baby and nothing changes that perception.

We returned to the consultant’s office the next week. He was sympathetic and tried to reassure us saying it was just “bad luck” to have two losses in a row and encouraged us to try again. But I vowed I didn’t have any more left to give and I couldn’t face another loss which was the inevitable conclusion of any future pregnancy. I was wrong.

Only two weeks later, I got pregnant again. I was shocked and stunned. It was a heart-breaking experience as we both felt a surge of fear and anxiety as we saw that second blue line appear on the test. It was Christmas Eve. The kids were hyper with excitement. We stood in the bathroom unable to look at each other, tears streaming down our faces. What had previously been a moment of wonder and anticipation was now a moment of panic – there was a sense of impending doom. What we had previously perceived as a moment of welcome to a new life was now forever altered to a question of when would we lose this one?