



The Miscarriage Association

OF IRELAND

Committee Office, North Strand Road, Dublin 15

Telephone: 8735702/8725550

Registered Charity Number CHY9738

Spring/Summer
1999

NEWSLETTER

Welcome

Welcome to your Spring/Summer Newsletter. Many thanks to those who contributed to this Newsletter. Your stories and poetry are always welcome. Many people who are recently bereaved find great comfort in the knowledge that others also share their feelings.

Mary Lawson & Maggie O'Neill

Book of Remembrance Launch

On November 26th last, Deputy Frances Fitzgerald launched our Book of Remembrance in the Royal College of Surgeons. Deputy Fitzgerald said that the Book offered a much needed opportunity to grieving parents to acknowledge their loss. She praised the Association for their work in helping parents to cope with this very tragic event.

The ceremony also marked the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. Hilary Frazer and Stephanie Blandford,

founder members of the Association, spoke of their early days on the Committee and both found the Book Launch a very moving occasion.

The Book is available to any parent or other relative who wishes to create a permanent record of their baby's short life. Anyone making an entry in the Book will be given a Remembrance Certificate recording the page number on which his or her entry has been made. This will allow later generations to easily complete family research.



Pictured at the Launch, left to right, Mary Lawson, Julie O'Donovan, Karen Gilligan, June O'Toole, Cathy Healy, Hilary Frazer, Mary Abraham, Deputy Frances Fitzgerald (seated), Beverley Turner, Maggie O'Neill, Stephanie Blandford, Monica Dunne and Cathy Lynch. Regretfully Eilis Kinnane was unable to attend on the night.

COMMITTEE

Maggie O'Neill

Chairperson

Eilis Kinnane

Joint Secretary

Julie O'Donovan

Joint Secretary

Mary Lawson

Treasurer

June O'Toole

Monica Dunne

Cathy Lynch

Beverley Turner

Karen Gilligan

MEETINGS – DATES AND VENUES

DUBLIN - CHANGE OF VENUE FOR SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Our monthly support group meetings are moving from St. Anne's Parish Centre in Molesworth Place as and from Thursday 2nd of September 1999 to Whitefriar Street Community Centre in Aungier Street in Dublin 2. This venue is on direct bus routes and is easily accessible from both sides of the city. The meetings will still be on the first Thursday of each month at 8 p.m. with the exception of July and August.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Canon Empey for the use of St. Anne's Hall for the past few years. We will all have fond memories of our meetings in this hall when it was often the first opportunity we had to acknowledge our lost babies and share our precious short memories.

- Cork:** Monthly meeting in Bon Secours Hospital, College Road, Cork. Second Monday of each month – Bank Holidays included 8.00-9.30.
- Co. Mayo:** Claremorris Social Service Centre. First Thursday each month. Contact Martina at 094-80334.
- Waterford:** Last Thursday each month. As a change of venue is being organised at the moment, please contact Lorraine Hales at 051-878829 for details
- Limerick:** First Wednesday each month at Social Service Centre, Henry Street at 8 p.m.

We've been busy ...

Service in Newbridge

On 15th November 1998, Cathy Lynch and I attended a Prayer Service in Cill Mhuire, Ballymany, Newbridge. This was organised by the Newbridge Miscarriage and Stillbirth Support Group. This was a very moving service with beautiful singing and prayers. Catherine Dempsey and Liz Duggan told their personal stories which I am sure touched everyone present. The Service ended with a tree planting ceremony and all present planted snowdrops in memory of their lost babies. Each springtime these will bring a little sunshine to the people of Newbridge. Well done to all those who worked so hard to make this such a special day.

Monica Dunne

Service in Finglas

The Miscarriage Association was invited to a Service held by Sr. Eileen Deegan for all those in the area who have lost a baby. Maggie O'Neill, Karen Gilligan and I attended a warm ceremony involving young and old women and partners who had lost babies before, during or after birth.

We all received a silver star with "I have carved your name on the palm of my hand" on it – also a candle for each of our lost babies. During the ceremony, the candles were placed on the stars on top of painted pictures of butterflies on the altar steps.

At one stage, the lights were turned down, the music was mellow and there was a guided meditation.

We found it to be a beautiful service, well attended by local people. Sr. Eileen was extremely understanding and sympathetic to miscarriage and stillbirth.

Maggie O'Neill spoke openly of her experience of miscarriage as did Ann Canning from the Irish Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society.

Cathy Lynch

Christmas Service of Remembrance – 13th December, 1998.

The Christmas Service held in conjunction with ISANDS was attended by over 800 people. This proves to us just how much people need such a Service at this time of year. Those who contacted us following the Service spoke of the

comfort they received being surrounded by other parents who have had the same sad experience as themselves. Having this special day devoted to their lost babies helped to make Christmas festivities all the more bearable. Those who have other children understand how Christmas is so geared towards children and for those who sadly have no other children, Christmas can bring heartache and pain that very few others understand.

Whitefriar Street Talk

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland were invited by Ann Gill of the Whitefriar Street Community Centre to give a talk on the effects of miscarriage on women, their partners and families on the 25th February 1999. Some of the women who attended included people who were bereaved many years ago. This night gave them an opportunity to acknowledge and grieve for their babies. The professionals who attended gained a greater insight into the effects of miscarriage on women's lives.

Radio Interviews

We have been busy doing several radio interviews throughout the country which we are always pleased to do. Sometimes these interviews help reach those who may know little or nothing of the work of the Miscarriage Association.

A.G.M.

This year, our Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 15th May 1999 at 11.00 a.m. til 2.30 p.m. in Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street. Anyone wishing to attend, please contact us at our phone number in Carmichael Centre.

Letters

We have lost three babies through miscarriage – Our “Little Angels” will never be forgotten by us. This is our story ...

John and I got married in September '92. Shortly afterwards I fell and hurt my back. We became pregnant soon afterwards and Sean was born in December '93. Because of on-going back problems, we were advised to wait 2 years before continuing our family. Eventually, December '95 arrived, I was given the all-clear by my physiotherapist to become pregnant again, and we did so, immediately. However I began to bleed at 7 weeks, I had a scan, and our doctor told us, sympathetically, that we had lost the baby and I was kept in overnight for a D&C. It was the 20th January '96. My feelings at that stage were shock – this happens to other people – not to me – I read up as much as I could about miscarriage – I remembered a girl telling me that she had had a miscarriage – she was strong – normal – I couldn't believe how it had affected her. At my six week check-up at the Miscarriage Clinic, a doctor told us that we could wait or try immediately to become pregnant – there was no strict rules. She threw statistics at us – I wasn't interested. I just wanted to be pregnant again. By April '96 I was 9 weeks pregnant – we were delighted, I was feeling fine and sure we would have no problems this time round.

However, this pregnancy was not to be, we lost another baby on 16th April '96. Another D&C. A family member commented that maybe it was just as well because this pregnancy was so close to the last one. We never questioned that person – we were just very hurt at the comment. At that stage I began to wonder would I ever carry another baby. I remember listening over and over again to Christy Moore's "The Voyage" – We started the voyage, there was just you and me, now gathered around us, we have our own crew. I cried when I heard those words. I also remember going to a pram shop, with Sean, now two and a half. I'd look at the double buggies – this was my goal – to have two children in a double buggy.

We attended the Miscarriage Clinic for my 6 week check-up. A lovely, sympathetic French doctor told us he was very sorry – this meant so much – he really understood and when asked when we could try again to become pregnant, he advised waiting a couple of months. He answered our questions honestly – it's not only the body needs to recover from losing a baby, but the mind too – give yourself time. He reassured us too – because I had carried a baby to full-term implied that the possibility of carrying another baby were high. I took another week off work and then tried to get back to "normal" – trying not to think of the third month period we

were advised to wait before becoming pregnant again. In May I contacted the Miscarriage Association and John and I went along to a meeting – it was great to meet other people who had lost babies and who were going through the same emotions of hope and fear as we were. John made a couple of comments at that first meeting. I suddenly realised that he had been hurting deeply too – I was so wrapped up in trying to get on, being strong, crying and getting over it, that I hadn't thought that it had taken both of us to create a pregnancy. He had lost out too.

Three months later I was pregnant again – at 7 weeks I got a bad pain in my side. A scan showed an ovarian cyst – the doctor explained that it was like a balloon which would probably deflate naturally and cause no problem to our pregnancy. However, three weeks later I got a slight twinge which, within an hour had me doubled over in pain. The cyst had ruptured and within a couple of hours. I was being operated on to remove it. I remember being in such pain that the doctors were left with no option but to remove it – I know now that there was a chance of losing one or both ovaries at the time and of course our baby too. I woke up to be told that the operation was successful – the cyst had been removed and I had held on to the baby – I was 10 weeks pregnant. I spent a week in hospital – presuming everything was fine until I asked a doctor what were the chances of holding on to the baby to full term – "Mrs. Lynch there are no guarantees" – however, I was sure that because the baby had survived a full anaesthetic and the aftermath of an operation we'd be fine. Her non-committal answer really jolted me. I couldn't believe that there was still a chance of losing another baby – at this stage I broke down, I really couldn't believe that there was a real chance of losing this baby.

My baby was a fighter and on the 18th April '97 Conor was born. A second beautiful precious boy. Comments like, "You'll have to try for a girl next" really hurt – had people no idea what we had gone through to have two healthy boys? Our Birth Announcement in the paper ended with "Remembering our baby angels in heaven" – never forgotten.

I breast fed Conor until he was 7 months old – I wasn't working and he fed well – however, when I began a period he refused the breast milk in a day – a couple of days later I was feeling unwell and I was bleeding on and off. I did a pregnancy test which was positive. After two scans within a week, the doctor explained that I had a blighted ovum, the foetus hadn't developed. We lost this baby. It was 11th February 1998. A friend commented that "it wasn't planned was it? Your baby is only 10 months old!" – she followed it with "I've said the wrong thing haven't I?". She had. Again I thought of a double buggy. Although that pregnancy wasn't planned, the hurt and grief of losing our baby was no less than before – I actually

found it very difficult to 'bounce back' the way everyone seemed to expect I would – I felt they were all saying "she's been through it before – she knows what happens!"

For the first time in my life, my periods became very erratic – 10 days early, 10 days late, a week early and a day late. I suddenly felt that I had no control over my body and I couldn't even plan another pregnancy. The urgency to become pregnant again was all I could think about. This was a difficult time, I never had this problem before. The Miscarriage Association have helped me through all this turmoil – to speak to other parents is such a treat, I am normal, my fears and all my erratic emotions are all normal.

I'm 30 weeks now. In the beginning I was quietly confident – however a scan at 7 weeks showing a cyst threw us. It disappeared and all was well until I had a bad crampy pain at 17 weeks. It was night-time and John was away on business. I was terrified again. A double check-up at the hospital found nothing. A comment from a doctor that cramps were fairly 'normal' during pregnancy left me feeling neurotic – however, the reality is that unless you have lost a baby, it really is extremely difficult to understand someone's fear/delight and other emotions at facing another pregnancy.

We have two precious boys, we have lost three precious babies. In 10 weeks, please God, we will have another treasure. I try to think of our 'lost babies' playing together in heaven waiting for their Mum and Dad and two brothers to join them. Our miscarriages were all early – 6, 7, 9 weeks – but from the moment you think you are pregnant they are real babies. I know we are lucky we have two boys, but the memory of our lost babies is very real too. I remember feeling bitter at one stage because a family member who had a miscarriage at 16 weeks had a burial for her baby. We ever had that chance to bury our babies – no grave to visit. Now we have the dates we lost our babies engraved on a paperweight. It is a beautiful reminder of our little angels – now in heaven. They will never be forgotten.

Sandra's Story ...

On the 5th of June 1997 I had just started a new job in my sons school and things seemed to be going really well. A week into the new job I didn't feel great but I put it down to nerves and excitement.

That Friday evening I got a terrible backache and I started to bleed quite heavily. It was then I realised that I hadn't had a period in a few weeks but I thought no, I couldn't be pregnant. Next morning I went to my Doctor who confirmed that I was pregnant. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, I was in shock. The Doctor said to rest and a scan was arranged for Monday morning. I was terrified going to that clinic, but, when I saw the scan, it

looked so perfect. Yet I was afraid to hope, again I was told to rest. This I did and the bleeding stopped. I thought maybe everything will go all right this time. Sadly that was not to be. As the bleeding had stopped I got out of bed and was resting down stairs. I was putting my son to bed when I got terrible pains in my tummy. I made it as far as the bathroom and it was there I had my second miscarriage. Its funny – the things that go through your mind at the time but I looked at my watch and it was 8 o'clock. Later that night my sister-in-law gave birth to a baby boy. The doctors and nurses in Mount Carmel were so kind, the next morning I had a D&C.

Everything happened so quickly. It was only when I got home from hospital that the reality of it all hit me. I felt numb, empty, only another woman who has had a miscarriage would understand. You blame yourself, thinking, maybe I have done something to harm the baby. I just went through the motions of each day not really caring what went on around me. I just felt the rest of the world was going on as normal and I had been left standing still. Looking back I don't know how I got through it but I suppose when you have another child you draw strength from somewhere. I went to the library and got all the books I could find on miscarriage.

I was just looking for answers WHY? WHY? ME? How could this happen again? The 19th of June was one of the saddest days of my life. I felt life would never be the same again.

But life does go on and to some degree time does heal but you never forget. That August we went away on holiday and more or less decided that we would not try for any more children. After two miscarriages I just could not face more heartache. We have one super kid already so lets be thankful. Life never works out the way you plan it? Three months later I found out I was pregnant and fear set in from the start. Every pain and ache brings fear. It was a very hard pregnancy with a lot of sickness, aches and pains. I could not enjoy the pregnancy for fear of something going wrong.

On the 13th of August, 1998 I entered the doors of Mount Carmel and after 6 hours of a very difficult labour, the baby got very badly stressed and they had to get him out quickly. Ciaran Matthew arrived, weighing in at 8lb 4oz. He has brought so much joy and lots of sleepless nights into our lives. I consider myself very lucky to have two wonderful boys and two beautiful angels in heaven who will never be forgotten.

Sandra

Sad Farewells

Baby of Karen Gilligan and Frank McQuade

Welcome Babies

Baby Aimee to Breda & Ronan Kirwan born 21st August 1998. A very welcome sister for Eleanor.
Baby Alan to Jackie and Shane Murphy, a very welcome brother for Jack.

MINI-MARATHON Sunday 13th June



As you know, the Miscarriage Association of Ireland is a totally voluntary group and is dependent on

annual subscriptions, donations and fund raising to help us continue with our ongoing projects. Please could you consider taking part in the mini-marathon and optaining sponorsnship for us. You will have received a sponsorship card with this Newsletter. If you are unable to run (or walk!) yourself perhaps you could persuade a relative or friend to so for us. Committee members Julie O'Donovan and June O'Toole are donning the trainers on our behalf and would be more than grateful if you would sponsor them. Just contact Maggie O'Neill (01-4531934) or Cathy Lynch (01-6249148) for details. Thanks.

The following is a summary of article by Caroline O'Doherty which appeared in the Cork Examiner on the 27th November 1998.

Parents offered Remembrance Book for Miscarriage Bereavement

SORROW strikes an estimated 50 new couples a day who lose their babies through miscarriage yet no national record exists to officially recognise their bereavement.

A Book of Remembrance launched last night by the Miscarriage Association of Ireland aims to fill that gap by providing parents with a register to enter details of their lost child along with the rest of the country's otherwise missing children. The Miscarriage Association of Ireland hope the book's permanent home will be in the National Library, where it will be available for consultation by family and friends, but it will also be brought around the country to the Association's regular regional Remembrance Services.

Parents who want to record their baby's details in the book will be sent a copy of one of the pages to fill in with factual

information, and a message if they wish, and the entry will be transferred into the book when it is returned. A receipt will be issued for every entry for the holder to use as their own personal record.

Association committee member, Mary Lawson, said the type of entry was an entirely personal choice.

Parents might not have named their child but that did not stop them recording their place in the family, the date they were due or the date they were lost.

"When you lose a baby during pregnancy, you have little or nothing to mark the presence of the baby in your life. The big fear is that other people will forget and future generations will not know their complete family tree," she said.

Official records rarely existed because many women did not make it as far as a hospital when they began to miscarry, and some did not even consult a doctor, but estimates put the number of miscarriages in this country at

about 50 a day, almost one-fifth the number of babies born each day.

The traditional reaction had been to encourage the bereaved parents to forget their misfortune and get on with life, but the Miscarriage Association was meeting women who had lost babies up to 30 years ago and are still grieving.

"When you lost a baby, you lost part of your future and we hope this book will at least recognise that loss. I lost several babies very early on and had no physical reminder of them. With one baby I had a scan photograph taken at eight weeks but even it faded so I had nothing left."

The remembrance book was launched by Deputy Frances Fitzgerald in a ceremony to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Association at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin last night. Parents can arrange to make their own entries by contacting the Miscarriage Association on 01-8735702 or 01-8725550.

Thank You



Many thanks to Eoin O'Riordá who risked lif limb doing a parachute jump to raise funds for our organisation. He raised the magnificent sum of £119. Well done and again a big thank you, Eoin

REMEMBER THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER AND WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE ANY POEMS, ARTICLES, EVENTS ETC. YOU WISH TO CONTRIBUTE TO IT. THE MISCARRIAGE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND CAN BE CONTACTED AT: The Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. Telephone: 8735702/8725550/8722914. Fax: 8735737