



The Miscarriage Association
OF IRELAND

Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
Telephone: 01 873 5702
www.miscarriage.ie
Registered Charity No. CHY9738

Summer
2009

NEWSLETTER

Hello again

You are very welcome to the summer edition of our Newsletter. To our regular readers, we would like to thank you for your continued support. If you are reading this newsletter for the first time, we hope that it will provide you with information, comfort and support and leave you feeling less isolated and alone.

The committee of the Miscarriage Association are very aware of the emotions associated with the loss of a baby through miscarriage. We would like to assure you that we are here in a supportive, confidential and caring capacity. Our phone lines and Website are available to you whether you have suffered your loss recently or many years ago. We would like you to also be aware that should you become pregnant following a miscarriage we are only a phone call away if you have any worries or concerns.

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations in life; we can never help another without helping ourselves." Ralph Waldo Emerson. Having lived through the trauma of losing a baby and having reached out to another for help, we on the Committee have discovered that in offering support, our gain has been tremendous and hugely healing and rewarding.

We would like to remind you that you can email us at any time and we will reply to your queries as best we can. You can check out our website www.miscarriage.ie for valuable information and up to date events. You can also have a look at our previous newsletters online by logging on to our website.

To all our members, on behalf of your Committee, I wish you courage, peace, hope and love in the days ahead. Always remember, you are not alone!

June O'Toole

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.

Membership Renewal

Just a little reminder - your membership may be due for renewal. Our annual membership is €15. We ask members not to send cash in the post – cheque or postal orders please.

Annual Service of Remembrance on Sunday 8th November 2009 at 3pm in St. Theresa's Church, Donore Avenue, SCR., Dublin 8.

This is a very beautiful Service of Remembrance and a wonderful opportunity to meet the Committee and connect with others who have experienced miscarriage and what it is to lose a baby. For those of you who have attended in the past, we hope you will join us again this year and if there is anybody you know that you feel would benefit from the Service, please pass on the word. Everybody is very welcome.

You can get in touch by email, info@miscarriage.ie telephone 01 873 5702 or letter.

Holy Angels Plot, Glasnevin

The management of Glasnevin Cemetery have extended their sincere apologies for causing any upset or distress to parents or families who have loved ones interred in the Angels' Plot of Glasnevin Cemetery as a result of the work done to maintain the area. This work is carried out to benefit all those who have loved ones interred in this plot. As this is a shared resting place it is important that it is maintained for all parents and families. They have explained that central to this principle is that no one family has priority over another in the way that they commemorate the shared graves. This means that, following the first period of mourning, all graves should look and be maintained in the same way. They are all grassed over forming a well tended lawn without any personal effects or borders. Children's names can of course be inscribed on the headstone provided by the Cemetery. Personal effects from more recent burials will be visible in this area.

The Cemetery is also planning to create an Angels Remembrance Garden in Glasnevin Cemetery at the Angels Plot.

If you have any plans, concerns or suggestions regarding the Angels Plot you can contact George McCullough, CEO, Dublin Cemeteries Committee, george@glasnevincemetery.ie (01-8301133). Of course, you can also contact the Miscarriage Association on this matter.

Angela Grace

Rotunda Bereavement Support

I was recently invited to represent the Miscarriage Association of Ireland and address a group of bereaved parents at the Rotunda Hospital. This was the second time I was invited to such a meeting and I was very honoured to be in the company of such a very special group. This was the conclusion of a Bereavement Support Programme that was designed to support those who had experienced the loss of a baby. Ron Smith Murphy represented ISANDS (Irish Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) and spoke eloquently about her own personal experience of loss.

As I sat in front of the group of parents who were recently bereaved, I could not but help remember my own personal experience. It made me realise just how necessary it is for each one of us to support each other. If our babies' lives are to have any significance, this is something we should remember.

I had two miscarriages which I believe have helped to shape me into the person I have become. There is a life before miscarriage – and there is a life after miscarriage. The loss is great and the grief is painful, sometimes it can be almost too much to accept. The question "Why Me?" was one I asked over and over again. But then as time went on, I began to think "Why not Me?"

I was heartbroken but with the help of my husband, my family, my friends and the Miscarriage Association, I got through that very painful time and I firmly believe that I have become more aware, more appreciative, and in a funny kind of way – more human.

I have three wonderful sons but it is the two little babies that didn't make it that have given me a life of purpose and in so doing have lived their life purpose.

The Chaplain of the Rotunda Hospital, Ann Charlton wrote this beautiful blessing and she has given me permission to share it with you. I hope that it will bring you some comfort and peace.

June O'Toole

A Blessing when grieving your Baby

May you go gently and take good care of yourself.
May you be receptive to the care and compassion of others.
May you recognise who and 'what' are helpful for you at this time and find ways to include them in your life.
May you allow yourself to find safe and helpful ways to express your feelings, whatever they may be.
May you be blessed with family and friends who cherish the memory of your baby with you.
May you find comfort and support on those really dark days when you are feeling lonely and lost.
May you have an Anam Cara (a Soul Friend) whose friendship, love and understanding nourishes and upholds you.
May you find shelter and protection when you are feeling vulnerable and fragile.
May you find a listening ear when you feel like speaking.
May you find space and peace when you need time alone.
May you find little snippets of beauty and joy to uplift and sustain you.
May you be blessed with good health and hope in your heart.

© Ann Charlton
Chaplain



The snowdrop symbolises hope in times of sorrow

Sad Farewells – for little Babies, born too soon....

For those of you who have suffered the loss of your baby over the last few months, we offer our deepest sympathy and would like to remind you that there is support available.

Anniversaries

5th Anniversary of Baby Dunlea - 29th May 2004

Dearly missed and lovingly remembered for the joy you brought us

During your short life.

You are always in our thoughts.

All our love, Mummy and Daddy (Margaret and Damian), little sister

Elizabeth and little brother Joshua Dunlea

Support Group Meetings

• Our Support group meetings continue to be held in **Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2** on the first Thursday of each month at 8pm (excluding July and August). This is an opportunity to meet with others who have experienced the trauma of miscarriage and air your feelings in a safe and confidential atmosphere.

• Margaret Payne has set up a **Support Group in Listowel, Co. Kerry**.

These meetings are proving a very valuable source of hope and comfort for all who attend. Niamh Ryan and June O'Toole met with Margaret recently in Dublin and were very taken with her warm and caring nature. She would inspire anybody, even when in the depths of sadness. Margaret has offered to help with our Phone Rota so you may have an opportunity to chat with her. Please check our Phone Rota on the website for details.

• **St. Michael's Family Life Centre in Church Hill, Sligo** acts as a base for anybody seeking support in the Sligo Area. (Contact No. 071 917 0329). Mary, Joan and Patricia are available should you wish to have a chat about any worries or concerns following the trauma of a miscarriage. They know only too well what you might be experiencing and can help you feel less alone.

ECTOPIC PREGNANCY

This year has seen the development of an ectopic pregnancy focus within the miscarriage association. I am one of three women who contacted the miscarriage association early in 2008 with a passion to bring information, awareness and support to women who have suffered ectopic pregnancy. An ectopic pregnancy is a life threatening condition which affects 1 in 80 pregnancies and the charity in the UK was set up following the death of a young woman from a ruptured ectopic. Women who are diagnosed with an ectopic pregnancy can be treated in different ways, but many women must undergo surgery and often have to endure both the loss of their pregnancy and a compromise to their fertility, although not to the extent many women fear, but this brings with it a different grieving process. Up until now women leaving Irish hospitals left with little information and no one to turn to for specific support for ectopic pregnancy. It is our aim over the coming months and years to provide information and support to those affected and raise awareness throughout Ireland of this type of baby loss.

Jennifer Ryan

If anybody needs further information on Ectopic Pregnancy, please get in touch and we will arrange for you to make contact with Jennifer, Helen or Deirdre.

Annual General Meeting – Thursday 4th June 2009.

We are very grateful to all who attended our Annual General Meeting and are delighted to announce that we have a new committee member Liz Burton. Some of you may already know Liz as she has been facilitating at quite a few of our monthly support group meetings over the last year. We are very fortunate to have Liz as part of our team as she is kind, caring and empathetic, having had her own personal experience of miscarriage.

For those who were unable to attend this year, we look forward to perhaps meeting up with you another time. Please consider coming along next year. Your views matter to us.

June O'Toole

Memorial Stones Update

~ Our first Memorial Stone was placed in the Plot of the Angels, Glasnevin Cemetery in 1999.

~ You may remember in our last Newsletter, Michele Turner wrote about our second Memorial Stone which we proudly placed in the Plot of the Angels in Deansgrange Cemetery on Saturday 11th October 2008.

~ Our third Memorial Stone was placed in St. Theresa's Church, Donore Avenue, South Circular Road, Dublin 8 in November 2008.

~ Our fourth Memorial Stone, (and first outside Dublin) was placed in St. Michael's Cemetery in Athy, Co. Kildare in March 2009 by Karen Carolan and Paul Lawlor.



Recurrent Miscarriages – My experience and my story – Katie Condon

20/03/2009

It's just over two years since my second miscarriage and I am only now able to write about them, never mind talk too much about them, which will come in time. I have deep compassion and empathy for others who have lost, but when it comes to going into details about my own, words fail me.

After two healthy pregnancies and two of the most beautiful babies I had ever set eyes on, I was content in the knowledge that I could do this 'baby' thing and I set about planning my third baby with the confidence of an army general. Within a month I was holding a positive pregnancy test and planning a future with my baby. It was all sorted! A few weeks later I started to worry. Things didn't feel right. I wasn't sick enough or tired enough and my confidence started ebbing away. A scan at eight weeks showed a beating heart and my little child seemed to be okay. I breathed out and started to plan again.

At twelve weeks I started to bleed. My head, heart and soul knew what was going to happen and I booked a scan with the small shred of hope that keeps people sane. Maybe, just maybe my baby would hang in there and my dreams would come true. Sadly, I didn't even make it to the scan and I lost my baby in the car park of the hospital as my husband helped me out of our car. In three long minutes it was all over and I thought I might never recover. My husband and family were solid rocks of sense and, after a D&C, I was home that night to my two young children who glowed with hope and joy. I was utterly devastated and felt entirely alone. My husband was shattered too, but he was able to reason it out and he was well armed with all the logic that is spoken when you miscarry – there's something wrong, its nature's way, it was never to be etc. I didn't buy it at the time. I wanted my baby. I wanted my lost baby. It was November 2006.

And so as is my way I planned my next baby. This would make it better. Within a month I was looking at another positive pregnancy test. I tested on Christmas Day 2006 and I spent the day in paroxysms of fear that it was too early and it would happen again. So I stayed quiet. I told no-one except my husband and I became paralysed with fear. At 11 weeks I went for a scan and to my dismay, I saw that look on the midwife's face. There was no heartbeat. A week of waiting later and again holding onto hope I was scanned again. This time it was for real. My baby was not growing and had no heartbeat. It was all happening again. I think I really felt my heart snap that time. It was February 2007.

And so, began my search for answers. Quietly and anonymously I researched the internet for reasons why women miscarry. I could not let it happen again and I also feared deeply that I would never have my third baby. My husband gently spoke of how lucky we were to have our two and I tried to feel lucky. Some days I felt lucky and other days I felt self-indulgently unlucky. During my research I came across some of the most harrowing stories of recurrent miscarriages that would floor the strongest people. Yet people get up and get on with it, carrying pictures of their lost babies in their hearts, and seeing them in their dreams. It's a lonely place to be. I felt the pain poured out on blogs, on support websites and in chat rooms. I joined in the chats and the support and empathy warmed me. I felt less alone. On several occasions I met with a group set up by the miscarriage association in Cork and I spoke and they spoke and we all went away a little less hurt.

Then I started to look at getting well, holistically speaking. My research brought me to the Cork Natural Fertility Clinic in Cobh (CNFC). This holistic clinic takes a multidisciplinary approach to fertility issues. The CNFC treats women who have suffered one miscarriage or more as well as those who are having troubles conceiving. Run by Deirdre Mackesy, it takes a customised approach to each case and using acupuncture, Chinese herbs, osteopathy, grief counselling and a host of other holistic therapies, it tries to heal the whole person physically, mentally and emotionally. It aims to get the woman into the best possible shape to conceive, sustain and nurture a growing foetus. The therapists are some of the most understanding, compassionate people I have ever come across. They are healers in the true sense of the word.

Within three months I was tentatively staring once again at a positive pregnancy test. This time I felt more in control of the situation. I was nervously positive. I felt that old chestnut, hope and the knowledge that I had done everything I could to help my situation. A scan at eight, ten and twelve weeks showed a perfectly growing and thriving baby and I started to relax and, dare I say it, plan again.

In February 2008 I gave birth to 9lb 4oz Daniel at home, by the side of my own bed. My husband was able to help deliver him and that first cry will stay with us for ever. He was and is as beautiful as my other children and he has, in his own way helped restore me. I have planted a Japanese maple tree in my garden to remember my lost babies and I think I have come to terms with my losses. I will never forget them, but then I don't want to.

The Cork Natural Fertility Clinic can be found at www.corknaturalfertility.com or by phoning 021 4812222.

Katie Condon

Please note: The Miscarriage Association of Ireland does not endorse any one treatment method but we will always be happy to share positive experiences with our members.

A tale of two miscarriages, a dad's story

My wife June's first miscarriage was relatively early in pregnancy. And it was just that, "my wife's miscarriage". It was all hers. For me, it was a women's medical issue, a gynaecological matter, "no big deal". I shrugged it off, concerned only with her healing and getting back to normal. For me, there was no real sense of a loss of a life, just a pregnancy that failed to take off. I don't think that either of us went through a grieving process, certainly I didn't. I just encouraged her to move on and get on with life.

And so we did. As nature took its course, in time June became pregnant again. To be completely honest, I wasn't particularly welcoming of the news. At this point we had two wonderful, healthy children and as far as I was concerned we were complete. But pregnant she was, and so we began to prepare for a new arrival and I started to become more accepting of the situation, even enthusiastic. This time, because of the previous miscarriage, we were more aware of the possibility of things going wrong and had some early scans to see how things were progressing. I clearly remember the last of these scans where we could see the infant's arm apparently waving. Later, we would come to think of this moment as her waving goodbye.

When June told me one day that she hadn't felt any movement for a while, I thought little of it. The earlier movements had been quite faint and, surely, unborn infants must have quiet periods. But, to reassure her, and encouraged by our GP, we arranged another scan. This time was so different to the earlier ones. When the nurse told me that they could not detect a heartbeat, I simply refused to understand. I thought there must be a problem with the machine, or they were doing it wrong. But no, the truth began to force itself upon me. June was devastated. I felt so guilty because of my earlier lack of enthusiasm about the pregnancy; it was almost like I had put a curse on it.

The next few days are a bit of a blur with some very clear, stark moments remaining etched in my memory. June was admitted a few days later and Julie Ann was delivered at 24 weeks. At this stage, my primary focus was my wife, how to support her, console her and get back to our life together. This was a bit like the first miscarriage but with a bit more fuss and bother.

All of this changed when the nurse asked if we would like to see the baby. June was unsure but my morbid curiosity impelled me to say "yes". And so, little Julie Ann was handed over to us in a kidney bowl, covered in green tissue paper. She was so tiny, yet so perfect. And so, so cold. I wanted to hold her, warm her up and give her the kiss of life. It was all I could do to restrain myself from trying. I had to keep telling myself it was too late; there was nothing I could do.

In an instant, it was no longer just the two of us in the room; now there were three. In that moment, I was transformed from concerned husband to devastated father. Now I suddenly experienced the full reality of what had happened. This was not a women's medical issue; this was a death. My daughter lay dead in my hand, literally.

That was the moment I climbed on board an emotional roller-coaster and strapped myself in for a very rough ride. In the hours and days that followed I experienced emotions I never suspected existed. I went through anger, then rage, resentment, then bitterness, despair and frustration. I cried uncontrollably. Most of all, I felt impotent. I was supposed to be the one to make everything right, the fixer, the protector, the provider. I was failing on all counts and I could do nothing about it.

We buried Julie Ann in the Holy Angels plot in Glasnevin. As we slowly came to accept what had happened to us, we began to reflect on the first miscarriage and wondered how much we had missed out on. We had never grieved or even really acknowledged our first lost baby. Now we call her Lauren. We don't actually know what sex the baby was, it was too early, but June's instinct tells her it was a girl and that's enough for me.

Julie Ann changed my life. I experienced a whole new set of emotions. It was like going from black and white TV to a full colour HD screen. Everything was sharper, deeper and richer. The pain was exquisite. But it was not all bad. I learned a new empathy, I became softer, more caring. Some might say I "got in touch with my feminine side". It was an experience I would never wish to repeat but I have grown as a result.

So, there you have it. I cannot speak for all men, just this one man. I suspect most men have a similar experience of miscarriage, some like my first one a mere medical matter and some like my second, a death in the family.

The Coombe Women's Hospital Annual Service of Remembrance 26 April 2009

On Sunday 26th April, Niamh Ryan and I attended the Coombe Women's Hospital Annual Service of Remembrance at Our Lady's of Dolours Church, Dolphins Barn. Those that attended received a very warm welcome from the staff of the Coombe who had worked so hard to organize the service. The church was filled to the brim as it has been over the years. The male vocalist stirred up emotions with the deeply moving hymns sung for the service. The readings were very moving and of course, the candle procession was very comforting to those who had lost their babies. Each family received a heart shaped necklace in remembrance of their lost baby when returning from the altar after placing their candle. Afterwards the staff provided refreshments and were on hand to talk and comfort those who needed support.

Angela Grace

**ISANDS Service of Remembrance in Glasnevin Cemetery,
Sunday 24th May 2009.**

I had the privilege to attend this very special service of Remembrance with my husband, Lorcan. We were there to remember our own two very precious lost lives who never got to share this life with us. We were also there on behalf of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland to represent all those who had lost their babies, born too soon. It was a very beautiful day and the climax for us was when the balloons were released. They seemed to race towards the sky and we all watched, spellbound, as one, connected in our sadness, until they disappeared from view.

Great credit must go to Ron Smith Murphy and the ISANDS team for this truly special tribute and very moving Service.

June O'Toole

27th Flora Women's Mini Marathon – Monday, 1st June 2009.

This was an absolutely beautiful summer's day. The sun was shining, the sky was blue and it was also incredibly hot! We all baked in the heat of the day and with sunscreen on and heads covered, we enjoyed the fun, the chat and the music. As always it is an experience to be remembered, where so many women come together to share and to care.

We would like to say a very big "Thank You" to all who supported the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. We can promise you that any money raised will help to make a difference in the lives of those who are in much need of support.

June O'Toole



St. Michael's Cemetery, Athy, Co. Kildare – fourth Memorial Stone

This Memorial Stone was dedicated by Fr. Joe McDonald and Fr. Seery following the Cemetery Mass on Wednesday 17th June 2009. This was a very moving experience as it highlighted awareness and gave significance to all those little lives that perhaps had previously been unacknowledged. The resting place of this memorial stone is very fitting as it is placed just in front of Our Lady's Grotto. If anybody happens to be in the area of St. Michael's Cemetery, it is well worth a visit.

We are very grateful to Karen Carolan from Athy who made that first phone call. Karen then wasted no time. She actually collected the Stone herself, in her car from Glasnevin Monument Works and brought it to its final resting place in St. Michael's Cemetery in Athy. Her phone-call to us and all her hard work has made such a positive difference to so many people.

We would also like to thank Paul Lawlor from St. Michael's Cemetery for his part in bringing this to fruition. Fr. McDonald, Fr. Seery, Patricia Kelly and all involved should be very proud of this very special Stone in memory of all those little ones who never got an opportunity to share their lives with us but will live on in our hearts forever.

We are hopeful to have these Stones countrywide, thus raising awareness of Miscarriage and also remembering all our precious little ones whose lives were too short but very precious.

We would like to remind you that if you know of a cemetery or suitable location in your part of the country that would have a place for a Memorial Stone, please let us know and we will see if we can arrange.

For further information, you can view our Memorial Stones on our Website.

June O'Toole

Welcome Babies

A very special welcome to Baby Emily Groves – a beautiful and much longed for baby daughter for proud parents Helen and Mark.

A very special welcome to Baby Eilis Phelan – a beautiful baby daughter for Deirdre and John and a little sister for big brother Gearoid.

A very special welcome to Baby Ronan Coleman – a beautiful baby son for proud parents Grace and Paul and a little baby brother for big brother, Callum and big sister, Cassie.

A very special welcome to Baby Eoin Cusack, a much longed for baby for proud parents Alma and Paul and a little baby brother for Daniel.

A very special welcome to Baby Catriona Nugent, a much longed for baby for proud parents Cathy and Joe and a little baby sister for big brothers Tomás and Seán.

A very special welcome to Baby Stephanie Ryan – a beautiful baby daughter for proud Mum and Dad and a little sister for big brother Daniel. Ena Ryan suffered an ectopic pregnancy and lost her baby. Thankfully she went on to have little baby Stephanie at the beginning of February, a sister for Daniel. On the 17th February, Ena's mother Ann Finger, as part of the Duleek Women's Forum, organised a coffee morning in aid of Ectopic Pregnancy and they raised €750 for this very worthwhile cause. The Miscarriage Association would like to send their heartfelt thanks to all involved for the money.

Our very best wishes and sincere congratulations go out to all the above families on the birth of what must be like a dream come true. If we have left anybody out, we apologise and will only be too happy to include in the next Newsletter.

Good Friday Concert

Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7 is a large centre for voluntary and community organizations and the Miscarriage Association of Ireland is one of the voluntary groups that use the centre.

Every year on Good Friday, Carmichael House fundraises by presenting Handel's Messiah in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. In order to support Carmichael House, the Association purchases two tickets and raffles them among Committee Members. This year I was lucky enough to win the tickets to attend this wonderful event.

On a beautiful spring evening last Good Friday, I arrived at St. Patrick's to hear the dulcet tones of Senator David Norris introducing the concert. He spoke of his great and ongoing support for Carmichael House and his appreciation of the role it plays in providing accommodation and other services for the voluntary sector.

The Messiah was performed by the Dublin Orchestral Players and the Goethe-Institut Choir. They played Part 2 of the Messiah finishing with the famous Hallelujah Chorus before the intermission when we were treated to refreshments by Carmichael staff. After the interval, the shorter third part of the Messiah was recited.

Handel's Messiah is worth hearing anytime. To hear it in the ancient setting of St. Patrick's Cathedral hosted by David Norris contributed to the wonder of the evening.

The Association is indebted to Carmichael House for its support over the years and is delighted to contribute to what has become a fixture of Easter in Dublin.

Marie Mc Manus.



Hospitals and Medical Staff

We will continue our efforts to meet with the Medical Professionals with the purpose of highlighting awareness and supporting each other.

We need your help

We would like to express our gratitude to those of you who have gotten in touch and offered support. Your help is greatly appreciated, no matter how small. If we all do a little then it is amazing that together, we can do a lot! In the end, we can help each other, help build relationships and at the same time, place significance on a *LIFE* - that little life which existed, if only for a short time. It is kindness and support that draws people together and encourages people to go on. If you have the time and are in a position to help, we would love to hear from you. Every bit of support, no matter how small, makes a big difference.

Note

This newsletter is circulated to members, hospitals and other interested parties and is available on the internet. The opinions in this newsletter are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. We welcome your stories, poetry, articles, anything you would like to contribute and anything you feel will help those who read this newsletter. Please mark all envelopes "Newsletter." Please include your name, address and contact phone number. Your name does not have to be included in the article, if you wish to remain anonymous. Sometimes, for whatever reason, it is not possible to publish or acknowledge everybody's correspondence. This does not mean it is not important so please keep forwarding your items of news for sharing.

Closing Date for Next Newsletter.... 26th September 2009