



The Miscarriage Association

OF IRELAND

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Registered Charity Number CHY9738



WINTER 2006/2007

# NEWSLETTER

## Welcome

Welcome to you all, wherever you are, to our Christmas Newsletter. I hope this finds you feeling well and able to cope. This can be a very difficult time of year and I would just like to remind you that if ever you are having one of those "bad" days, please remember that there is support on the other end of the telephone and on our website.

For those of you who attended our Service of Remembrance, I hope you left with feelings of comfort and hope. As you know the theme was "Stars" and hopefully when you hang your little star on your Christmas tree, you will be doing so in unity with many others. Just as the stars are scattered in the sky, our little stars are scattered in many homes and hearts. For those of you who were unable to attend the Service, there is always next year and we would love to see you there.

Christmas brings such powerful emotions, joy tinged with sadness, regret, lightened by hope! And in this time of mixed emotions, it is useful to remember that Spring is just around the corner.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a very big thank you to our committee members, who have done trojan work and continue to do so with such commitment, vitality and above all a sense of humour. It's a privilege to be part of such a great team.

I wish you all Peace, Joy and Happiness at Christmas and for 2007.

June O'Toole, Chairperson  
December 2006

## Miscarriage Association of Ireland on World Wide Web

Official Launch of our Website 26th September 2006



From left to right: Michele Turner, June O'Toole, Fiona Looney

**O**ur website was officially launched by Journalist, Fiona Looney on 26th September in Buswell's Hotel, Dublin.

People gathered from far and near and comprised of founder members of The Miscarriage Association of Ireland, past and present committee members, members of the Association, professionals and members of complementary organisations.

We were delighted to have Fiona Looney present and that she agreed to officially launch our new website for us. She spoke eloquently and her words were honest, funny and moving at times. She then cut the ribbon and declared the website officially launched.

*continued on page 2*

Fiona has kindly allowed us to reproduce her words here:

*'Groucho Marx famously once said he wouldn't want to be in any club that would have him as a member. While I think he would have cut a fairly peculiar dash in the Miscarriage Association, I'm sure even Groucho Marx would have appreciated the paradox of this club to which nobody really wants to belong.*

*I know I'd rather not be here tonight. I'd prefer to be at home shouting at a child who'd be nearly eight now, bullying him into doing homework and going to bed. And I'm sure many of you here tonight would also give anything not to be here.*

*But here we all are: and to quote another famous line, when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. The Miscarriage Association are the lemonade makers in our midst (wine dealers as well tonight, happily). This is a strong, brave, phenomenal bunch of women who've drawn from their own personal tragedies to provide sympathy, empathy and*

*support to countless other women touched by miscarriage.*

*We all know the statistics: the conservative estimate is that one in five pregnancies ends in miscarriage. That's almost as many babies as there are people with brown eyes in this country. Imagine us without brown-eyed people and you begin to get a sense of just how many missing little people we're talking about.*

*Miscarriage is an everyday tragedy – in fact, in this country, it's 50 everyday tragedies.*

*But in the midst of tragedy comes hope, positivity and healing. And the Miscarriage Association, across its 18 year history, has provided all of these things in abundance. One of the members said to me the other night, "every life has its purpose. We just have to discover what that purpose is." Well, the women of The Miscarriage Association – the mothers of all these short lives – should take consolation and pride from knowing that the love and support they've provided to*

*thousands of Irish women has given purpose to the lives they carried.*

*Now, through the talents and hard work of Michele Turner, aided by Angela Grace, the association has its own website. This not only extends the reach of the association, but it also allows women to remain anonymous, if they so choose, and still access information and support from other women who've been through the pain and loss of miscarriage.*

*June cheerfully tells me that the Miscarriage Association is one of the most unpopular charities in the country. I suppose we can all understand why. Once, when they were collecting money in Grafton Street, a man came bounding over with his offering because he thought they were collecting for Miscarriages of Justice. When he learned the true identity of the charity, he walked away.*

*Well, the Miscarriage Association won't walk away. Polite society might prefer if women – and men – didn't talk about their miscarriages – but we're living now in a country that's*



From left to right: Angela Grace, June O'Toole, Michele Turner, Mary Lawson, Irene Roche, Niamh O'Donoghue



From left to right: Beverly Turner, Mary Lawson, June O'Toole, Angela Grace, Sheila, Irene Roche, and Mary Abraham

only too aware of the devastating results of keeping cold truths hidden. I had a miscarriage. Almost all the people in this room suffered miscarriages. And we all owe it to those little lives lost not to pretend they never existed. For as long as women and men need it, I hope the

Miscarriage Association of Ireland continues rattling tins and scandalising men in Grafton Street. And I know it will continue to reach out and support those who are going through the pain of losing a child. Because as the Miscarriage Association has demonstrated so

quietly and beautifully through its works, where there was life, there is hope.

And I'm delighted now, to declare [www.miscarriage.ie](http://www.miscarriage.ie) officially open.'

Kindly reproduced with the permission of Fiona Looney

## Remembrance Service, Greystones – Saturday 18 November 2006.

For the second year running a service of Remembrance for all babies lost before, during or after birth was held in the parish of Greystones in St Killian's church, Blacklion. The service was attended by both young and old and was appreciated by everyone. The women of the local liturgy group did great work again this year in organising such a wonderful service. The beautiful music, the thoughtful readings and reflections, the candle procession and even the welcome cup of tea afterwards all helped to make it a very special occasion. Mary Lawson and I would like to thank the group for inviting us to the service and giving people the opportunity to sign the Book of Remembrance afterwards.

**Angela Grace**

## Holles Street Service of Remembrance – Sunday, 3rd September 2006

Irene Roche and I were among several hundred people who attended the above Service of Remembrance held in the Church of St. Andrew, Westland Row. It was a very beautiful, special and dignified Service. The music added to the mood and although sad, it allowed us share special moments with our babies who were a part of our lives for a short time.

A Service like this can help us on our journey and there is healing in sharing our grief. I don't believe we ever "get over" the loss of a child but in time, we learn how to cope and come to terms with our loss.

It was a great honour and privilege to share that afternoon with so many people who had so much in common. Great admiration must go to the staff of Holles Street Hospital for being so caring and for organising such a beautiful Service.

**June O'Toole**

*JUST A NOTE: Sometimes, for whatever reason it is not always 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.*

# Baby Loss Awareness Day

15th October 2006

On October 25th, 1988 President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the month of October Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month in the United States. He called upon the people of the United States to “observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities” and stated “National observance of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month...offers us the opportunity to increase our understanding of the great tragedy involved in the deaths of unborn and newborn babies. It also enables us to consider how, as individuals and communities, we can meet the needs of bereaved parents and family members and work to prevent causes of these problems”

In February 1997 Robyn E. Bear and her husband Russell from the United States lost their first baby. They went on to lose another five children through first trimester miscarriages. Following her losses Robyn discovered that October had been declared Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month. She felt one special day should be marked as a national day of remembrance. October 15th was decided upon as Robyn's close friend, Lisa Brown, had lost her baby on October 15th. These women, along with a few others joined forces to create a movement. Their aim was to work with local and national leaders to get the day recognized, as well as creating awareness and education for the public and understanding and compassion for families and parents in their time of grief. And, of course, initiating a special day for people to remember their children. October 15th, 2000 was the first year and the parents behind the day got 11 Governors in the US to make proclamations. This increased to 50 the following year. Parents around the country began to have events to mark the day, such as remembrance walks and candle lighting ceremonies. On the 28th September, 2006 a bill was passed in the United States House of Representatives declaring October 15th Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day.

In 2002 Babyloss, a voluntary UK group, inspired by

the parents in the U.S., marked October 15th for the first time. Bereaved parents made and sold pink and blue ribbons and the profits were divided between five national organizations: ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices), the Babyloss fund, Ectopic Pregnancy Trust, Miscarriage Association and SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society). The following years have seen Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day in the UK grow in strength. The main group, Babyloss works with representatives from the five charities and helps groups organize their own events throughout the country and publicises the day. The campaign now gets coverage in the press and has featured on national and regional television. Services, balloon releases and fundraising events are held all around the country.

On Halloween 2005 I lost my first child at the beginning of my second trimester. I was heartbroken and lost and didn't know where to turn. Like many women I turned to the internet. I spent any free hours during the day or late at night surfing the net trying to find information or answers. I didn't find a reason why my child couldn't have been born and grown up to be just like his Dad, but what I did find was hope and support in the form of other mothers who had lost babies. I was inspired by parents like Robyn E Bear and those involved in Babyloss in the UK who were working to help other parents and honour their babies' brief lives. I knew in Ireland there was still not enough education and awareness about pregnancy and infant loss. I also knew parents felt they didn't have many outlets for their grief or a way to honour their precious children, except in the privacy of their own homes, and this could create a sense of isolation and despair. The Miscarriage Association do a fabulous job and I had found great comfort in going to their service a few weeks after our miscarriage. I wondered could they do something to mark October 15th here as I wished to take part. I contacted Michele Turner, who I knew was involved with MAI designing their website. I had met Michele on one of the few Irish support boards for parents who experienced pregnancy loss. Michele herself was a bereaved parent

who had lost two children and was also inspired by other parents trying to make change and a difference. Michele contacted June O'Toole and we provided MAI with information about the day. Luckily they were extremely interested. Hence, October 15th came to be in Ireland.

The MAI and ISANDS came on board with their full backing. Due to time constraints it was agreed the first year would be a small occasion, the aim being to mark the day by promoting the Wave of Light and creating awareness, including holding an information day in Dublin on the 15th. There were many many hours of emails and phone calls and research. Michele and I were in constant contact several times a day for months on the lead up to the day. We worked with MAI and ISANDS committee members, creating and printing posters, making candles, writing press releases and drumming up publicity. Everyone's work culminated in a Wave of Light across Ireland at 7pm and an awareness day in Dublin. We hope to see other parents come on board in future years and join forces

to create a movement organising services and events around the country. This is what October 15th is all about in our minds. Parents helping parents and joining together to create awareness and honour all our children's brief lives. May the candle light shine bright in Ireland on October 15th for many years to come!

Michele and I would like to thank everyone involved in the Miscarriage Association and ISANDS for supporting the idea to mark this day in Ireland. We would also like to sincerely thank all the other parents who offered their backing and support in marking this day. We of course have to thank Joe and Mike for their love and support. And, most especially, we would like to thank Aingeal and Rheanna Turner and Finn Stewart O'Neill. Their little lives did indeed have an impact and purpose. They brought October 15th, 2006 to Ireland. We hope they would be proud of their mums, as that is all we could have hoped for by initiating this day.

**Gill Stewart**

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## Annual Service of Remembrance

St. Theresa's Church, Donore Avenue  
November 12th. 2006

The annual Service of Remembrance was held in the now very familiar setting of St. Theresa's Church on Donore Avenue, South Circular Road. This venue has started to feel like home after holding the service there for the past few years. This year, a record attendance shared in some very tasteful readings and reflections. The Lucan Folk Group provided a truly moving musical accompaniment, aided by Philip Lawson who performed a beautiful guitar solo.

Fr. Sean McArdle was joined by Rev. Sonia Hicks who shared some very interesting personal insights into

the experience of miscarriage. A theme frequently touched on throughout the service was "stars" and each family was presented with a Newbridge Silver star to take home. We hope that everyone who took home a star will hang it on their Christmas tree as a reminder of their little baby and as a reminder that we are not alone.

For many, the highlight of the service is the Procession of Candles and this year did not disappoint. It's an awesome sight to see so many candles, each one representing a little lost infant. It's even more awesome to think that these represent only a tiny fraction

of the number of miscarriages that have taken place. This year, the effect was enhanced by the dimming of the altar lights to allow the candles to illuminate the scene.

Afterwards, quite a crowd stayed behind to have a cup of tea and a chat and there was a long queue to sign the Book of Remembrance. All in all, it was a very moving afternoon. For anyone who could not come this year, keep it in mind for next year. We can promise you an hour or so of mixed emotions; sadness, certainly; but also comfort, hope and maybe even a little joy.

**Lorcan O'Toole**

# Opinion Page

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Articles are welcome for our Opinion Page. This page is used for people to state their opinions regarding miscarriage. This could mean:

- Treatment in hospital
- Aftercare
- Infertility problems
- Future pregnancies
- News that you wish to share with us about your miscarriage

**This month we are delighted to share with you the positive experience of two of our members. Both these women have had several miscarriages but now after following the Na Pro Technology Fertility Programme, they have both given birth to healthy babies. It is always great to hear good news especially for those who have experienced the sadness of miscarriage. We at the Miscarriage Association are pleased to be able to share their stories with you all.**

**However, I must utter a word of caution. Unfortunately, any one programme does not work for everyone. We hope that sharing the experience of others may help some of our members to go on to give birth to healthy babies in the future. As such, the Miscarriage Association of Ireland does not endorse any one treatment method but we will always be happy to share positive experiences.**

**We wish both families every success in the future and we are delighted that Na Pro treatment has worked so well for both of them.**

**Angela Grace**

## **To all the members of the Miscarriage Association**

My name is Grace Coleman. I have been married to Paul Coleman for four years. Our son Callum Thomas was born on 6th March 2006. This is the baby we never thought we would be holding.

After having six miscarriages God finally answered our prayers. We had been to doctors in Dublin, Galway, Sligo and London. Not one of these doctors could find any problems. I was told I was producing “gluggers” (egg with no yolk) and was sent home by one doctor. We were told by another doctor to go home, buy a bottle of wine and keep at it! We are told by another doctor to use a Sperm Doctor. We didn’t want to be sent home anymore. We needed someone to stand up and genuinely try to help us. None of them seemed to care. We felt very isolated and brushed under the mat.

One day in January 2005 I received a clipping from a newspaper about a Dr. Boyle and the Napro Treatment Programme from my friend. What the hell – I’ll call him. What’s one more doctor? We got an appointment straight away. Dr. Boyle started us on the programme

on the very first appointment. Five months later we were expecting our little angel.

Dr. Boyle was the most professional and caring man we have ever met. He really does want to help you. He understood our anxiety and our pain.

The programme is exceptional. It leaves no stone unturned. The backup support is fantastic. My little boy is proof in the making. Not enough people know about Dr. Boyle and the programme. A friend of mine is in the programme and is four months pregnant. It may not work for everyone but people should at least know he’s there. You won’t know until you try.

If anyone would like to contact me I would be more than happy to talk and try to help.

We are the happiest couple in Ireland. We only know too well the heartache, anguish, strain and loneliness of miscarriages. But we never gave up.

Yours faithfully  
**Grace Coleman**

**Grace can be contacted through  
the Miscarriage Association**

## Opinion Page (contd.)

I am writing this letter to share my experience in hope it will help other people avoid the years of trauma of multiple recurrent miscarriages that I have been through. I suffered six miscarriages all ranging from seven to thirteen weeks. Myself and my husband had all the routine checks done in our local hospital after my second miscarriage and they could find no reason as to why and I had a scan done on my womb which showed that I had a slightly abnormal septum which should not cause miscarriage so I was told to go ahead and try again. So I did, this time I got to thirteen weeks and I was sure I was going to make it only to have another miscarriage, this little baby developed, it was a little boy, we brought him home and buried him with my dad. I will never forget it.

I was then sent to one of the Maternity hospitals in Dublin for further tests and again they could find no reason why and I was told to try again which I did, only to have another miscarriage. Following that miscarriage my doctor in my local hospital put me on aspirin and injections for my next pregnancy only to have another miscarriage. I then went to another maternity hospital for more investigations and there they decided to operate on my womb to see if it was

the septum that was the cause, they removed it and I was told if it was the cause of the miscarriages then it was taken care of. I felt very sure this must have been my problem and felt confident to try again which I did, only to have another miscarriage. I felt this was the end of the road for me and by now I was almost forty.

Then a friend told me about this doctor in Galway that was supposed to have a good success with all pregnancy problems so I rang him, he spoke to me personally on the phone and explained about his Na Pro Technology Fertility Treatment and said he had success with a woman who had nine miscarriages. I was very impressed and decided to give it one more try. We went along with the programme and now at the age of forty one I have a perfect little baby girl. We can never thank this man enough and I only wish someone had told us about him years ago and maybe I could have avoided years of pain and heartache. Na Pro Technology Fertility Treatment is available in clinics in Ireland and can be found on the Internet under recurrent miscarriages. The one I attended was in the Galway Clinic and the doctor was Dr Phil C. Boyle.

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## Special Dates

Our little Angel, lost 26 December 2004, we'll never forget the pain when they told us you were gone and for Little Baby Cahill lost 25 January 2006. Thinking of you both at Christmas and always.

Love Dad & Mam xxxx

### Poetry Corner

There is always the hope of tomorrow  
to brighten the clouds of today.  
There is always a corner for turning  
no matter how weary the way.

**Virginia J. Ruchlmann**

## Support Group Meetings

Our Support meetings continue on the first Thursday of every month (except July and August) in Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. The next meeting is Thursday, 4 January 2007 at 8pm. You are very welcome to attend, if you have been affected by loss through miscarriage. Please come along, you might also be in a position to offer advice as to how we could improve on the support we offer.

## Flora Women's Mini Marathon

The FLORA WOMEN'S MINI MARATHON took place in Dublin on Monday 5th June 2006 (Bank Holiday Monday). Members and friends of The Miscarriage Association of Ireland participated to raise funds. Great fun was had and plenty of chat while we went around the course. Thanks to everyone who participated on our behalf. We are very grateful for your generous giving of time, skill and sponsorship, especially those who traveled long distances to participate. Thanks also to those who couldn't be with us on the day but generously gave through sponsorship.

## Cork Women's Mini Marathon

The 25th Cork Women's Mini Marathon took place on Sunday 24th September 2006. Thanks to everyone who took part in this to raise funds to support the Miscarriage Association of Ireland.

## Christmas Cards

A big thank you to all those who supported the Miscarriage Association by purchasing Christmas cards this year and in the past. Your support is very much appreciated and sending our Christmas cards helps raise awareness for all those who have experienced miscarriage.

**FUNDRAISING** If you are interested in fundraising for our Association, we would welcome your ideas.

Please let us have your stories, poetry, articles, coming events, sad farewells, welcome babies, anniversaries and anything you feel will help those who read our newsletter. Please mark all envelopes "Newsletter". Please include name, address and a contact phone number. Your name does not have to be included in the article if you wish to remain anonymous.

## Publicity

This has been a great year for publicity for the Association. Over the last few months members of the committee have had the opportunity to speak both on television and radio to raise awareness of miscarriage and promote the work of the Association. We would like to thank all those who helped make this possible, not just the radio and television stations but those who worked in the background to make it happen.

**25 September 2006** June O'Toole, Chairperson, spoke on Country FM about the launch of our website

**26 September 2006** – June O'Toole, Chairperson appeared on Ireland AM, TV3 with Fiona Looney to mark the launch of our website

**11 October 2006** – Angela Grace, committee member spoke on Ocean FM about Baby Loss Awareness Day

**15 October 2006** – Irene Roche and Denise Shaw both committee members spoke to TV3 News @5.30 at the Baby Loss Awareness Day

**13 November 2006** – Irene Roche, committee member spoke on the subject of miscarriage on the Afternoon Show, RTE1 with Blathnaid Ni Chofaigh

**PLEASE NOTE:** Our 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.

**Closing date for contributions to the next Newsletter – 30th April 2007**

### Miscarriage Association of Ireland Committee

June O'Toole  
Chairperson

Mary Lawson  
Treasurer

Niamh Ryan  
Secretary

Angela Grace  
Committee Member

Irene Roche  
Committee Member

Denise Shaw  
Committee Member