



The Miscarriage Association  
OF IRELAND

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Registered Charity No. CHY9738



# Spring 2010 NEWSLETTER

## ***Welcome!***

Welcome all to our Spring/Summer edition of our Newsletter. How time flies! For many of us time has a way of disappearing, almost unnoticed and then for others, time can appear to be endless! For those of you who have experienced the loss of a baby, recently or long ago, we extend our sincerest sympathy and we would like you to be aware that our thoughts are with you. This is a time for sharing feelings and reaching out to someone, even a stranger who perhaps might be able to help, especially if that someone has experienced the loss of a baby.

The committee of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland know only too well those feelings of loss, grief and sadness. We too have experienced the loss of a Baby through miscarriage. We have been where you might be just now. We have experienced those all too familiar feelings of sadness loneliness, isolation and desperation. We have asked the questions “*Why me?*” “*Will I ever have another baby?*” “*Will I ever have a successful pregnancy?*” “*Will I try again?*” “*Will I ever be happy again?*” The questions are endless and the answers aren’t always readily available!

Yet, life goes on. There is life before miscarriage and then there is life after miscarriage. For those who have experienced loss, life is never the same again. Then, *is life ever the same from one day to the next?* We must try to hold on to hope and believe that there is a plan for us all. We can help each other along the way. A kind word or deed can turn someone’s life around. We are all unique and therefore we each have something to offer to each other.

There is healing in caring and sharing. Let us remember that there is light after darkness, just as day comes after night. No matter how bad it gets, there is somebody who understands and there is support available. You don’t have to suffer in silence and you don’t have to journey alone!

On behalf of your committee, we extend our support and friendship to you all.

***June O’Toole***

### **Website**

[www.miscarriage.ie](http://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.

## Poem

### Liquidambar

My November child lies bleeding.  
What should have been its cradle  
Stained maple.

Red surging out of green  
Should be instead  
A child's dream  
Pages splattered with paint.

Not stained with age spots  
Crackling dry and curling inwards  
Congealed blood on crimson leaves  
Veins stemming the flow of life.

I lean my cheek  
Into the star shaped leaves.  
The soft "baby feel" surprises me,  
More tender than any living hand  
But impossible to hold.

Every October I notice the change.  
This tree becomes me  
And the clinging leaves  
My vain attempt to hold  
On to one so small.

This unseen child of mine  
Who did not make it after all.

©Breda Joyce

## Welcome Babies

A very big welcome to Baby Emer, born on 26th July 2009, a much loved and longed for Baby daughter for proud mum Liz O'Dell and husband Mike

A very special welcome to baby Daithi James O Dubhgain born on the 2nd September 2009, a very special little boy loved very much by his proud mom and dad, Jennifer and Paudie'

Congratulations to Margaret & Damian Dunlea on the birth of their new daughter Victoria Katherine, a very welcome sister for Elizabeth and Joshua.

Mai-Ly arrived home to Ireland from Vietnam in October 2009. A very welcome and long awaited daughter for Michele & Joe, a sister to two angels, Aingeal & Rheanna.

Congratulations to Karen Carolan and proud Dad Gareth on the birth of their beautiful baby daughter Eabha, born 22nd January 2010.



*The snowdrop symbolises hope in times of sorrow*

## Anniversaries

6th Anniversary of Baby Dunlea - 29th May 2004

Dearly missed and lovingly remembered for the joy and happiness you brought us during your short life. You are forever in our thoughts. All our love, Mammy and Daddy (Margaret and Damian), and three very special children we have been blessed with since we lost you, Elizabeth, Joshua and Victoria.

2nd Anniversary of Baby Katie Doran, Wexford

Born an Angel June 1st. 2008 Due date October 25th 2008. Katie our Angel in Heaven,  
Thinking about you everyday.  
Love you forever and always,  
Mammy, Daddy & Callum xxx.

## *Bereaved Parents Support Group – November 2009*

### *Rotunda Hospital*

The Rotunda Hospital ran a series of workshops for bereaved parents in November 2009. The group of parents attended workshops over a series of weeks to help them work through their grief. On the last night both the Miscarriage Association of Ireland and ISANDS (Irish Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) were invited to speak to the parents. I was privileged to represent the Miscarriage Association on the night.

The format of the evening was for us to share our personal experience of loss. So I told my story openly and honestly. I explained the emotional journey I travelled after the loss of my two babies through miscarriage. I was surprised after so many years at the depth of my emotions and the many memories I still held of that very sad time in my life. I can still remember the kindness shown to my husband and I at the time and the support and encouragement we received. Sadly I can also remember many insensitive words and gestures and the inability of many to understand the grief we were experiencing. On a more positive note, speaking on the night helped me to reflect on the last couple of years and how I have grown and changed. I will never forget my babies but I no longer feel the despair that I felt after my babies died. My work with the Miscarriage Association has allowed me both to comfort others and receive emotional support when I have needed it.

The speaker from ISANDS gave a very heartfelt talk which I have no doubt will be a source of comfort to the parents. I hope my talk will help in some small way.

*Angela Grace*

### **Flora Women's Mini Marathon – 7 June 2010**

The Flora Women's Mini Marathon takes place on Monday 7 June 2010. Why not walk or run on behalf of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. We would be very grateful for your support. This is a real fun event. It is a great opportunity to get together for a very worthwhile cause and keep fit at the same time. It is a carefree day where everybody supports each other. Afterwards we usually meet and enjoy some refreshments while discussing all the events of the day!

If you are interested please contact us by post or email [info@miscarriage.ie](mailto:info@miscarriage.ie) and we will provide Tee-shirts and Sponsorship Cards.

**Please Note:** being sponsored for a charity does not entitle you to participate in the event. All participants must enter on an official entry form either applying online <http://www.womensminimarathon.ie/> or picking up an entry form from the Evening Herald.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Our AGM will take place on Tuesday 15th June at 8.30pm in Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. All members are very welcome to attend. As you can imagine, there is a great need for support following the loss of a Baby through miscarriage. We do the best we can but would love to be in a position to do more. If you feel you might be in a position to help, why not come along to our AGM and have a chat with one of our committee members. Nobody is asked to take on more than they can handle. Every bit of support, no matter how small makes a huge difference.

### **Christmas Cards**

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank all those who purchased our Christmas cards this year. For the first time our cards were available to purchase online and this proved to be a great success. The sale of Christmas cards is not only a financial benefit to our Association but also helps to promote awareness of miscarriage and let people know that there is help at hand for those that need it.

## Your Stories

### *Life after Loss, coping and moving on*

When I was pregnant for the first time I used to check all the time for spotting and bleeding. My mum had a miscarriage on her first pregnancy and my grandmother had a stillborn baby and I thought if it was going to happen to me, it would happen in my first pregnancy. Thankfully, I sailed through my first pregnancy and had a healthy baby boy.

When I became pregnant for the second time, I never even considered the possibility of miscarriage. When it happened I was stunned. I always thought it was more common on first pregnancies and I just never expected it on my second. The shock was unbelievable. I totally rejected the grief that tried to consume me and ignored the pain that was bubbling away under the surface.

I thought that if I did not acknowledge it, then it was not real. For two months I did not cry. I did not talk about the fact I had lost my baby. While people tried to console me, I rejected their support and refused to talk about it. My husband was outwardly upset and that only annoyed me. I pretended it had not affected me so why should it affect him?

Only when I was on the verge of a mental explosion, when my husband and family were so worried about me they were tip toeing around me and begging me to get help, did I realise what had happened. I could deny it all I wanted but eventually it would catch up with me.

I saw a counsellor and the grief poured out of me. The sheer ferocity of it stunned me. I was in pieces. I had to deal with the loss and it was hard. There were times I did not know how I would get through the day. Seeing pregnant women everywhere, made me feel like someone was stabbing me through the heart with little daggers.

However, as the tears flowed and as I learned to talk about my baby and accept that he or she was gone, I started to heal. I wrote a diary and this was very helpful. By writing about how I felt, I was able to get things off my chest. Also, as it was private, I could be very honest about how I was feeling as I did not have to consider anyone else's feelings. It worked well for me and as I wrote into it every day, the hurt started to lessen as time went by.

Thinking about my baby still hurts now, 5 years later but somehow I have learned to live with that hurt. I have learned to be a more compassionate and understanding person because of what I went through and I have learned that I can lean on my husband, family and friends when I need to grieve and that they will be there for me and support me through the dark days.

I learned that life does go on. It may never be the same again but it goes on. The little life that was here so briefly may have left a little crack in my heart but it has also enriched my life in many other ways and for that, I am eternally grateful.

*Siobhan O'Neill*

## Your Stories

### *My experience of having a miscarriage and an ectopic pregnancy – Ena Ryan*

I am writing my experience hoping that it might bring comfort and hope to anyone who has suffered a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy. After I had my miscarriage, my world was shattered and after I had the ectopic pregnancy, I needed to know there was light at the end of the tunnel.

In 2004 we started trying for our first baby and I was eventually pregnant. We were so excited. I quickly worked out my due date and started making plans for the future. At 6 weeks I started to bleed slightly so I went to my GP. She said everything was probably ok but sent me to hospital for a scan to make sure. After waiting nervously in the corridor, we were called in and scanned and the nurse said “there’s no sac there”. I had had a complete miscarriage, the baby was gone. I later thought what a horrible way to tell someone they have just lost their baby. I was devastated. I cried for days, I just couldn’t get over it. I felt like there was a huge void in my life. Everything seemed so irrelevant. I had lost my baby and just couldn’t think about anything else. I remember sitting in meetings with people arguing over business and I just thought it all doesn’t matter. I had lost my baby and everything else seemed so trivial. This was November 2004. Several months later, I was upset and someone asked me “Was I not over it yet! It was months ago” I couldn’t believe someone would be so insensitive. I thought maybe it’s not right to grieve so much, so I decided to go to a bereavement counsellor. It helped me a lot. The counsellor told me *I had the right to grieve* and what I was feeling was normal, this was exactly what I needed to hear. She recommended naming the baby and deciding if I felt it was a boy or a girl. She also suggested planting a tree in the garden so we had somewhere to go to talk to the baby as we obviously didn’t have a grave to visit. We named our baby Sam and I decided he was a boy.

In 2005 we wanted to try again for another baby but I had no period since the miscarriage (5 months now). I felt I needed to be well emotionally before trying again so I visited a lady who specialised in fertility acupuncture and Chinese medicine. Following treatment, my periods returned and the next month I was pregnant. We were delighted but terrified. The miscarriage took a lot of the joy away about being pregnant again. At 6 weeks I got abdominal pains and went for a scan. Thankfully the baby was there – seeing the baby on the scan was the most wonderful thing – but the doctor couldn’t find a heartbeat. We were told not to worry as it was still early and to come back at 8 weeks. At 8 weeks the heartbeat was found and the baby was growing and healthy. We were overjoyed. Our little boy Daniel was born on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006. He is a healthy, active, lively, happy child.

When Daniel was almost 1 and a half we decided to try again. It previously took several months to get pregnant, so when I did a test the first month and it was negative, I wasn’t surprised. The day after doing the test I got a period but it didn’t stop. Two weeks later I was getting a bit concerned. Even though the test was negative I was afraid I was having another miscarriage somehow. I rang the VHI nurse line for advice. They said it wasn’t normal to bleed for so long and to get it checked out. The pregnancy test was negative so I did another one and this one was positive! I was winded! I was 6 weeks pregnant and didn’t know it. However I knew something wasn’t right.

I went to a GP who said I was fine, I hadn’t miscarried, I just needed bed rest for the next 6 weeks. But I still felt something was wrong. As I had had the miscarriage I knew I could have an early scan. (I now believe that having the miscarriage actually saved my life.) I rang the hospital on Monday morning to arrange a scan. The nurse told me she “was comfortable leaving me till Friday” so I had the scan then. There was no baby in the womb. They told me I had another miscarriage. They did the routine blood test for the blood count to confirm it was a miscarriage, told me to come back on Sunday for another blood test and then to come back for the results on Tuesday. I didn’t make it to Tuesday. I went unconscious on Monday and almost died. I had an ectopic pregnancy and when it ruptured I was bleeding internally and went unconscious. I was actually very lucky. Another nurse got my first blood test results on Saturday and rang me. I believe she saved my life, her name was Lilianne. As she didn’t have my notes, she asked what was I told on Friday. I said I was told I had a miscarriage. She asked if I had a pain in my shoulder and other questions. I had no pain, just the bleeding. I asked her why. She said that if I had a miscarriage the blood count would be 100, mine was 22,000. I was 7 weeks pregnant. She suspected an ectopic pregnancy and wanted me to be seen by a doctor on Sunday again. So on Sunday another doctor scanned me.



## Your Stories

### *Ena Ryan continued*

There was still no sign of the baby in the womb so she rushed the next set of blood tests and I waited in the hospital. The blood count this time was 24,200. The baby was growing. I was taken into hospital Sunday night with the intention of having keyhole surgery on Monday to remove the baby from the fallopian tube. However Monday morning the baby ruptured through the fallopian tube and caused internal bleeding which left me unconscious. This was very surreal. When I came to, a nurse was holding my arm calling my name, I had an oxygen mask on. My husband was crying, porters were running everywhere to get a trolley to bring me to surgery. It was just like on ER! I had an emergency operation to stop the internal bleeding and save my life. It was very scary and I think for my husband this was a very scary time.

When I woke up I asked could they save my tube. I was told no, they had to remove it as it was damaged so much. No-one mentioned the baby. When I asked I was told that the baby can never be saved. I had lost my baby, lost my tube and I could have died. It was a lot to take in. I also had to recover from a major operation. I couldn't walk for two days after the operation; I just lay in the bed in a lot of pain with a lot of tubes hanging out of me. The fact that I had lost a baby was lost amongst everything else that was going on. It took a long time to recover from the operation and when I got out of hospital it was hard to mind my 1 year old son. I wasn't allowed lift him for 6 weeks so I had to have help everyday – to lift him into his cot, into the bath, into his high chair, to carry him etc.. It took 6 months before my energy levels returned back to any sort of normal.

The surgeon who operated on me is a fantastic surgeon but unfortunately she lacks in bedside manners. At the 6 week check up I asked a question and referred to “my baby”. She said it wasn't a baby; it was a “cluster of cells”. I got upset. This “cluster of cells” was my baby, and if it had implanted in the right place it would have been my baby in my arms in 7 months time. I realised then, that I was the illness (i.e. the ectopic pregnancy or broken leg etc..) and not a person to the medical profession. I was never offered counselling or given any information on ectopic pregnancies, losing a baby, future fertility or anything. My baby was never mentioned. I was only told that I was 10 times more likely to have another ectopic pregnancy! Wonderful! This was June 2007 and my baby would have been due 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2008. We named this baby Lily after the nurse that rang me on the Saturday and took me into hospital on the Sunday. If I had waited until the Tuesday to get the test results I would have been at home or driving the car when I went unconscious and I might not be here now.

In June 2008 I found out I was pregnant again. Considering I have one tube I was delighted it only took 6 months to get pregnant this time. My baby was due on the same date as my last baby Lily – the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009. I had to have a scan at 6 weeks to see if the pregnancy was normal or ectopic. You can't imagine our joy when we were told that the baby was in the womb, i.e. it was a normal pregnancy and not ectopic, they even found the heartbeat. We were overjoyed. Our beautiful little girl Stephanie was born on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009. We are so blessed to have two wonderful healthy children.

After the ectopic pregnancy I was told that I had a 65% chance of getting pregnant and I was 10 times more likely to have another ectopic pregnancy yet within 6 months of trying I was pregnant again and the pregnancy was normal. The gynaecologist gave me some good advice when we were considering if we would even try again. He told me to forget that I ever had an ectopic pregnancy and just try as normal. He said remember that I have 7 out of 8 chances of having a normal pregnancy and to focus on this. He said if, God forbid, it is an ectopic pregnancy it will be caught early and if the tube is damaged there is always assisted fertility, i.e. IVF, he said it's not the end of the road, there are still options. This was great advice.

*Ena Ryan*

**The National Maternity Hospital, Service of Remembrance, St. Andrew's Church,  
Sunday 6th September 2009.**

Irene Roche and June O'Toole were proud and privileged to represent the Miscarriage Association of Ireland at this very beautiful and moving Service of Remembrance.

As we entered the Church of St. Andrews Westland Row on this very cold, windy and wet Sunday afternoon, the atmosphere changed and was so different, so welcoming on the inside from the cold outside. We were struck at the welcome we received. It was like a meeting of friends. The staff of the National Maternity Hospital did everything they possibly could -and more, to ease the sadness and bring comfort to those who were grieving the loss of their precious little baby.

The music, the singing, the sermons, the refreshments, the whole service was an expression of love, support and friendship and it was a great honour to be present with such very special people.

This beautiful Service of Remembrance is held on the first Sunday in September every year and is a time to remember and reflect on a little life that was too short and yet very precious.

*June O'Toole*

**The Miscarriage Association of Ireland Service of Remembrance, St. Theresa's Church,  
Sunday 8th November 2009**

What an experience! Every year is different, fresh and truly amazing. Every body is touched in their own unique way. The love in St. Theresa's Church was very real and could almost be felt.

This year our theme was focussed on "The Candle, bringing light into our darkest days." We had the privilege of being in the "caring hands" of our celebrants Fr. Sean McArdle and the Rev. Katharine Poulton. We were also honoured to have for the first time Margaret Woulfe, who interpreted and "signed" for the Deaf Community. This added a new dimension to our Service. There are no words to do justice to the music and song performed by "Word in Harmony" and Violinist, Aisling Lawson. Every note and every sound transformed ..... It was as though we entered a new world, surrounded by love, beauty, light and comradeship. We shared a common bond – we were there to remember and reflect on all those little lives born too soon and yet so much a part of our lives!

**The Rotunda Hospital Service of Remembrance, St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral,  
Sunday 22nd November 2009.**

This was a very beautiful, dignified and comforting Service of Prayer and Reflection to remember with love and celebrate the short and precious lives of babies who have died. It was a privilege for both my husband and I to be invited to attend and represent the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. In doing so, we were there on your behalf to remember and reflect on all those little lives who may have touched us only for a brief moment but will remain and live on in our hearts forever. Great tribute must go to Chaplain Ann Charlton, and all the Staff of The Rotunda Hospital for organising such a beautiful, fitting and dignified Service of Remembrance.

*June O'Toole*

## **Church of St. Philomena's Parish, Palmerstown Service of Remembrance Friday 27th November 2009.**

This was the first Service of Remembrance, organised by Fr. Tony and the parish team of St. Philomena's Church. Yvonne and I had the honour to represent the Miscarriage Association of Ireland. We were touched by the beautiful music and scripture readings which brought comfort and consolation to so many. Brenda and Cathy and Fr. Tony should be very proud of this Service which is hopefully the first of many.

*Yvonne Shiels and June O'Toole*

## **ISANDS Service of Remembrance, Sunday, 6th December 2009.**

This is always a truly beautiful experience and one that sheds light and brings comfort and healing to those who have suffered the loss of a child, before, during or after birth. It was an honour, as always to be present, in the company of so many others who shared a common bond – the loss of their child! Both Irene Roche and June O'Toole were among those in attendance. The music, homily and Service was enriching and uplifting and as we left, we felt proud and privileged to be able to honour those precious little lives who died too soon.

Great tribute must go to Ron Smith-Murphy and all in ISANDS for organising, yet again, such a beautiful and moving Service.

*June O'Toole & Irene Roche*

## **Support Group Meetings**

Date: The first Thursday of every month (except July and August)

Time: 8pm

Venue: Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

The meetings for the next two months are 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010. 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.

## **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.

We welcome your stories, poems and any other entries for our newsletters. Closing date for next newsletter: 10th September 2010.

*Mary Lawson.*

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