



Multiple Sclerosis Society
Northern Ireland

Foyle Branch ~ FOCUS ~

Member Support & Services



SPRING 2004

FIREMAN FIRED!

Barry's Story

My name is Barry Todd. I'm a 38 year old firefighter with the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade. I have been a firefighter since 1991. In December 2001 I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. My world fell apart, but gradually you come to terms with the illness. I have a wife and 2 sons aged five and ten. I was off sick for 6 months before returning to work on modified duties which I carried out for 11 months before the brigade sent me to see their medical adviser.

I had a talk with the doctor and he concluded that I would never be fit enough to be operational again. He said he would get back to the brigade to see what they wanted to do. The brigade took less than 24 hours to decide that they were going to put me out on ill-health and stood me down the next day. That was in April 2003. I have since been appealing their decision but to no avail and as of 9th April 2004 I am officially out of my job.

Despite the fact that in October 2004 the Disability Discrimination Act will change to cover firefighters, the NIFB have refused to accept this and apply the DDA early so that I could keep my job. It's as though they were saying " we don't have to do anything yet, so we aren't going to. Take us to court."

I have appealed again with the support of Kieran Harris (Chief Executive) and Terry McNamee (Development Officer) from the

*Barry on the day he
passed training*



M.S. Society, pointing out that the NIFB is ignoring its obligation under section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act (the legislative basis of the Good Friday Agreement) to promote equality of opportunity for disabled persons. I also intend to bring my case to the

(Continued on Page 2)

Excerpt from NI Fire and Rescue Consultation Paper

'6.14 The present pension arrangements were introduced in 1948. Since then, the dangers of firefighting have been offset to a large extent by improved equipment and greater attention to firefighters' health and safety, including training. Firefighting still presents obvious risks, and ill health and injury benefits need to reflect this. However, much of the work currently undertaken by firefighters does not actually involve fighting fires; notably training, fire safety work and other preventative initiatives. This type of work does not require the physical fitness criteria for front line firefighting. It therefore makes little business sense that experienced firefighters who are considered no longer fit to carry out the full range of firefighting duties should be forced to retire, and be denied the opportunity of redeployment within the service.'

Statutory Duty Unit of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to highlight the unfair practice being promoted by the NIFB. I also believe that they are going against my Human Rights.

I would be grateful to hear from anyone who feels they could support me by, for example, writing to

Mr. Colin Lammy
Chief Fire Officer,
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland,
Brigade Headquarters,
1 Seymour Street,
Lisburn
BT27 4SX

or by emailing the NIFB at
bhq@nifb.org.

You can also email me at
baztodd@msn.com

and I look forward to your support.

Barry Todd

BRANCH SERVICES

The Foyle Branch of the MS Society delivers a range of services providing help and support to people living with and affected by MS, whilst funding research for hope in the future. Information and advice is available Monday to Friday from the Foyle Branch office, 58 Strand Road - Tel (028) 7136 0831.

The MS Society Foyle Branch provide a range of services including: Physiotherapy exercise sessions, Yoga, Tai Chi/Qi Gong, Tuesday Club, Thursday Support Group, Accessible Transport, Library, Local and National Magazines.

For information on any of our services please telephone the MS Society Foyle Branch office on (028) 7136 0831, e-mail: msfoyle@tiscali.co.uk or visit our website at www.msfoyle.freeserve.co.uk

Who's Who

Development Officer: Terry McNamee

Tel: (028) 7136 0831

Welfare: Moira Leitch

Tel: (028) 7126 7400

Chairperson: Peter Eakin

Tel: (028) 7133 8641

Vice-Chair: Michael Heverin

Tel: (028) 7126 1118

Secretary: Marie McGinn

Tel: (028) 7186 0152

Treasurer: Damien McKenna

Tel: (028) 7136 3921

(MS Society Charity No: 207 495)



MS
SOCIETY
N.I.

FOYLE
BRANCH



Check out our Website!

www.msfoyle.freeserve.co.uk

CHARITY QUIZ NIGHT *Waterfoot Hotel*



Pictured above are the winning team. Seven teams battled it out on the night with the 'Half Dozen' winning by a narrow margin at the end of the night. The team was made up of 1 to 7; Tony, Sinead, Laura, Lorna, Aimee and Jenna. Jenna was unavailable for the photograph. The Quiz was an excellent night's craic and raised a total of £259 for the Branch. Our thanks to Maurice, Damien and Katie for their expertise and help on the night.

MS NURSE

• *Six Monthly Report* •

My post commenced in August 2003 and I have spent the last six months setting up the service and assessing the needs of my client base. As part of my orientation I worked as a staff nurse on Ward 2 in Altnagelvin and in Spruce House, Gransha. This allowed me to form working relationships with the staff in these areas and to observe how the units function on a day-to-day basis. I have made contact with the PAM's (Professions Allied to Medicine) in all three Trusts and made provision for referrals to be made and received by these professions.

I have attended introductory meetings with all five branches of the MS Society in the Western Board and attended other functions organised by the MS Society. The Society has helped to raise the profile of the job by arranging interviews with various local papers, e.g. the Derry Journal and within their own publications also.

I have created a telephone help line for clients with an answering machine to take messages if I am out of the office. I endeavour to return any calls within the next working day. I also have a pager for any emergency calls which can reach me anywhere in Northern Ireland. I have created my own documentation and keep notes on any patients I see.

Mrs. Josie Ramsey, MS Nurse Specialist assists me with clinical supervision, which I have found very helpful and we try to meet once a month in Belfast. This allows me to keep in contact with the other MS nurses.

I have been involved in meetings with the Western Health Board re Disease Modifying Therapies and the commencement of new patients on treatment. In January of this year I took over the care of 50 Western Board patients who are currently on treatment and 13 patients who have been under the care of Healthcare at Home. I am now in the process of commencing 12 new patients on Disease Modifying Therapies.

A laptop computer has been ordered for me

and I hope to move into a new office in the newly opened Spruce House which has been relocated to Altnagelvin Hospital. These two things should allow me to provide a more efficient service.

My weekly timetable:

Monday - Dr. Droogan's clinics, bimonthly in Altnagelvin, 1st Monday is in the Erne and 3rd Monday is in Tyrone County Hospital.

Tuesday - Office/Belfast for Clinical Supervision

Wednesday - Office

Thursday - Dr. Gibson's Clinic, Altnagelvin/Dr. Patterson's Clinic monthly, Tyrone County in am. Dr. McCarron's Clinic, Altnagelvin, pm.

Friday - Office.

I use the days that I am in the office to bring clients to see me who are newly diagnosed or clients who need information/advice with regard to symptom management or any other problems they may have. I also see any inpatients in the hospital that may have MS or make domiciliary visits where necessary.

Figures: September 2003 - January 2004

Patient Caseload

122 General

62 Disease Modifying Therapies

Clinics Attended

21 within Western Health Board area

MS Society Meetings

9 within Western Health Board area

Domiciliary Visits

9 within Western Health Board area

Outpatients Contacts

15 within Western Health Board area

Inpatient Contacts

17 within Western Health Board area

Referrals to PAM's

10 within Western Health Board area

Phone calls

405 Professional

225 Patient

Fiona Mullan
MS Specialist Nurse





MS IN THE PRESS

Top Dog

When Lee turns up at St Marychurch post office to collect benefit payments, the staff and customers queue up to watch - because Lee is a six-year-old Labrador retriever.

Says owner Virginia Williams, who has MS, "He puts his front paws on the counter and places the allowance book from his mouth through the cashier's grille. Then when the money has been counted, staff call his name and he obediently puts his paws on the counter edge again and collects the book and money."

Lee is 35-year-old Virginia's pride and joy and came to her from the Dogs for the Disabled training establishment at Exeter a couple of years ago. Since then, reported the **Torquay Herald Express**, he has learned many new tricks to add to the commands he already knew. He's quite an accomplished emptier of washing machines. He can also pick up the phone and bring Virginia her emergency call line if she needs it. And it's all in a dog's day to collect the post from the doormat in his mouth each morning.

Why Tai Chi?

Tai Chi, an ancient form of exercise from China, has been found to improve the condition of people with a variety of disease including MS, reported **The Daily Telegraph**. Dr Chenchen Wang of Tufts - New England Medical Centre in Boston looked at 47 studies which had investigated the effects of tai chi. "Overall, these studies reported that long-term tai chi practice had

favourable effects on the promotion of balance control, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness and reduced the risks of falls in the elderly," he wrote in *The Archives of Internal Medicine*. But he said he did not know the mechanisms by which it seemed to give benefits.

Cannabis spray soon?

British doctors could be allowed to prescribe a cannabis-based drug to their patients as early as this summer, reported **The Financial Times**.

GW Pharmaceuticals said it was close to winning approval for its Sativex oral spray for people with MS. The company had indicated previously that the drug would be given the all-clear in 2003. Some analysts warned that the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency had raised questions about the dossier submitted for the drug application. But executive chairman, Geoffrey Guy, said this was a normal procedure and that the questions had been answered.

He told **The Guardian** recent concerns over the mental health effects of cannabis were not relevant to the product. "It is very different from the heavily daily use of recreational drugs by under-18's."

• REMEMBER •

The N.I. Mag and this Branch news-sheet can also be provided on cassette tape. Please contact the Branch office for more details on (028) 7136 0831

research

Rehabilitation Sciences Research Group
Room 7C04, University of Ulster
Shore Road
Newtownabbey
BT37 OQB

Dear Terry,

I am delighted to inform you that the findings of our focus group study have been published in April's edition of the journal Multiple Sclerosis Clinical and Laboratory Research. This is a prestigious international journal, which is read by medics, healthcare professionals, and researchers who work with people with MS across the world.

Please find enclosed a complementary copy of the article. Names and potentially identifying details have been changed in order to protect the identity of all participants. It is my sincere hope that this research will make a real difference to caregivers of people with MS. In particular, I hope that these findings will challenge the way medics and healthcare professionals approach caregivers, and will ultimately impact upon the way in which support is offered to caregivers. This journal has never published this type of study before and we were thrilled when it was accepted for publication. It is a real indication of how important the role and experiences of caregivers are.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and all the staff at the MS Society for helping me with my research. If you have any comments, or if you would like to talk to me about this article please do not hesitate to contact me on 02890 366423.

Yours Sincerely,
Laura McKeown
(Research Student)

Multiple Sclerosis and Bladder Problems

The University of Ulster at Jordanstown, partially sponsored by the MS Society, has just completed a study looking at the benefits of exercises and physiotherapy techniques and bladder problems.

I am a physiotherapist who has specialised in helping all sorts of people with this demoralising and intimate problem. Most participants felt that they were definitely helped and a further study is about to commence.

Additional centres for treatment have been located in the north of the province and include Altnagelvin Hospital, The Dalriada Centre and the Route Hospital.

If you are interested in finding out more please contact me as detailed below. All enquiries are treated in the strictest confidence and there is no obligation for you to take part.

Address: Doreen McClurg
Room 7C04
School of Rehab Sciences
University of Ulster
Jordanstown
BT37 OQB

Phone: (028) 9036 8127/07773984594
e-mail: doreen@mcclurg29.fsnet.co.uk



Laura's Research Article is available at the Branch Office Library. Please contact us if you would like to read it on (028) 7136 0831

University of Ulster Research

Dr Andrea Lowe-Strong informs us that The University of Ulster has been awarded £26,000 from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (in the USA) to undertake research into the benefits of reflexology for symptoms of MS. The trial will be starting soon and if you would like to take part, please contact Terry at the Foyle Branch Office.

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Check out our Website!
www.msfoyle.freemove.co.uk

Trust Caring and Nursing Agency *are now offering* **City Breaks With Care**

*Fancy a midweek stay in a
quality North West hotel which
also provides nursing/care,
support calls or all-day
carer support.*

*Contact Elma on
(028) 7137 3843 or email:
care_services@tcna.org
for further details*

• AGM Notification •

You are cordially invited to the
Multiple Sclerosis Society N. Ireland
Foyle Branch's

Annual General Meeting

which will be held in
Foyle Disability Resource Centre
(Glenbrook)
on Tuesday 11th May 2004 at 3.00pm
~ *Everyone Welcome* ~

• REMEMBER •

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MS

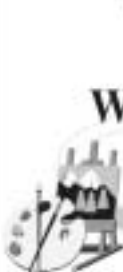
**MULTIPLE
SCLEROSIS SOCIETY
FOYLE BRANCH**



invites you to a



BRING & BUY CAKE & CRAFT SALE



in
Waterside Presbyterian
Church Hall
(Clooney Terrace)



on

Friday 14th May 2004

@ 7.30pm

• Admission (including Coffee) : £1.00 •

~ *Everyone Welcome* ~

MS SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW NI COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER

After many years of collaborating with the Society on various projects, including research, fundraising and organisation of conferences, I commenced employment as NI Community Support Officer on 2nd February 2004. My predecessor, Ita McDonnell, retired on 31st December 2003 and to attempt to replace such an important and respected member of staff is a daunting, if not impossible, task. My previous experience in multiple sclerosis has provided the Society with the opportunity to slightly restructure the job role.

My base will be the Resource Centre and I will continue to be the primary source of information and advice on all aspects of MS including benefits, welfare grants and provision of emotional support for all people affected by MS. Additionally I will be the Society's line manager for the co-funded Western and Northern Board MS Specialist Nurses and the Mid-Ulster based Complementary Therapist. I will be collaborating with our Development Officer, Danny McQuillan, on the organisation of regular Area Branch Forums, Information Days and the Research Conference in October. My professional background and continuing contact with previous colleagues will provide our membership in Northern Ireland with up-to-date, informed comment on new research initiatives and reports which often 'hit the headlines'.

The post of Community Support Officer is there for all of you in Northern Ireland and I am keen to stress that I am available for presentations at branch meetings or other events where contact with people affected by MS can be made and the role of the Society can be highlighted and developed in association with my colleagues at the Resource Centre. I look forward to working with you all.

Robert McConnell

Community Support Officer

Tel.: 028 9080 2802

Mobile: 0780-1032124

E-mail: Robert.mcconnell@mssocietyni.co.uk



Robert McConnell, NI Community Support Officer pictured at the Foyle Branch information stall at the recent Branch in Focus day held at the Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh to mark the beginning of MS Awareness Week

PRIZE DRAW!!!

GREAT GOLDEN RAFFLE RESULTS

The winners were as follows:

1st Prize - £1000

- Emma Boyd c/o M Boyd, Lisburn

2nd Prize - Personal Computer

- K Brown, 36 Thistlemont Park, Lisburn

3rd Prize - Tumble Drier

- S Thompson, c/o Shorts

4th Prize - 2 night break for 2 in Edinburgh

- D. La Thangoe, Warlock Road, Bridge on Weir, Scotland

5th Prize - Sanyo DVD Player

- George & Grace Moore, Belfast

6th Prize - Sharp Microwave

- P. McLaughlin, 25 Shantallow Avenue, Belmont, Derry.

7th Prize - 2 night break for 2 at the Narrows, Portaferry

- Paul Copeland, Bingnian Drive, Belfast

8th Prize - Samsung Video Recorder

- V Shanks, Dunmurry

9th Prize - Meal for 2 at the Slieve Croob Inn

- Stephen Gallagher, Belfast

10th Prize - Luxury Hamper

- Mr A Bergman, Belfast

Thanks to all who purchased tickets or helped in any way with the Draw.





Marie McGinn

..... on tour

Terry and I visited the new Spruce House in the grounds of Altnagelvin Hospital, and were more than impressed with what we saw.

Sister Deirdre Lennox (Ward Manager) has been with Spruce since 1988, starting in the old building in the grounds of Gransha.

As we approached the building, there was a covered entrance, which I was grateful for as it was raining. On entering, there was a reception area and a magnificent glass sculpture which depicted a map of the north-west region. The rivers that are shown on the map actually feel like running water. This is a beautiful sensory piece of art.

There are four corridors which are colour coordinated: green, almond, honey and blue. Three of these are in use at the moment. Rooms are double and single and Spruce has a twenty-six bed/patient capacity. Each room is en-suite with track and hoist leading from bed to bathroom.

This will make life easier for staff and patients. The Bathrooms also have toilets which double as bidets and state of the art sinks which can be adjusted to the user's height.

The Out-Patients Waiting Room interior was designed by Stella Burnside, Chief Executive of Altnagelvin Trust. This room is tastefully decorated with wooden floor and ceiling. White walls and green seating make this a very pleasant room. There is a Day Room and a Quiet Room for one

or two people when they want to be alone with their thoughts, read or listen to relaxing music.

Our own MS Nurse, Fiona, has an office where she can consult with patients. This will be a great advantage to both her and people with MS.

There is a Consultant's Room and a Video-conferencing Room with the technology to link up with patients in their own home. This will make life a lot easier. Instead of having to travel to Belfast a person can be taped in their own surroundings as to their individual needs.

Spruce House also has a Hairdressers and a large bathroom with a height adjustable bath. The Independent Living Unit has a grand kitchen where patients who are ready for home can show the staff their cooking abilities.

This beautiful building has delicate lighting throughout. When Terry and I were there, it was raining outside, but Spruce House was so bright and airy, with extra wide corridors, the rain didn't matter.

The sensory garden all around is a delightful view. Lawns are being laid with a few wild flowers, which will add to the pleasure of both staff and patients.

Congratulations to all involved with Spruce House and we wish Deirdre and her staff happy times in their great new surroundings.

Photograph taken at the recent Friends Of Spruce House AGM which took place in the new building in the grounds of Altnagelvin Hospital

Please don't forget to return your Membership forms and fees to the office. Foyle Branch does not keep any of the fees (they go straight to Headquarters), so if you would like to add a small donation towards the running of the Branch, it would be much appreciated.

