

WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of the Meningitis Trust Newsletter. Inside, you can read about two unique 'firsts' – our first ever Family Day, which took place on 1st February 2009, and the first ever CoMO World Meningitis day, on 25th April. We also have a feature on our long and successful struggle to have the pneumococcal vaccine introduced, and you can discover how sharing a personal story can have a huge impact on others.



Carole Nealon, General Manager, Meningitis Trust

In these challenging times, there are also some ideas about how you can support the team at the Meningitis Trust in reaching out to more and more families during 2009 and beyond. You can raise awareness of meningitis by volunteering to distribute potentially life-saving 'Signs and Symptoms' cards to doctors and schools in your area, or raise some vital funds by taking part in a skydive or running event, or perhaps hosting an event of your own for family and friends.

And finally, please take a few minutes to familiarise yourself with our new logo, and if you have any suggestions for future articles that you would like to see in the Newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Many thanks

Carole Nealon
General Manager

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Photocall with Miriam O'Callaghan (see back page)

Our New Look

You might have noticed that we're looking a little different these days! The Meningitis Trust 'swirl' (right), which has served us well since 2002, has been replaced by a new logo, the feather, which was chosen because it more aptly reflects the ethos of the Meningitis Trust - strength and support. The new logo will be incorporated into our leaflets, Signs and Symptoms cards and fundraising packs over the coming months, and already features on our recently-launched website www.meningitis-trust.ie. **We hope you like it!**





Family Day, Sunday 1st February 2009

The first ever Meningitis Trust Family day was held on a crisp, cold but thankfully dry day in Dublin Zoo. Sixty guests, including 32 children, joined the staff of the Meningitis Trust, our mascot Monty the Duck and the Lord Mayor of Dublin for a wonderful day of fun, interaction and bond-building. Lisa Slattery, Community Services Nurse with the Meningitis Trust, who organised the day, was delighted with the outcome: the feedback has been wonderful. The day provided an opportunity for families from all over Ireland to meet – often for the first time – other families who had been through a similar experience. And to see the children having so much fun as they made new friends, got their faces painted, and played with the animals made it all so worthwhile. Funding allowing, we hope to welcome many more families to similar events around the country in the future.’



1. Dublin's Lord Mayor, Councillor Eibhlin Byrne (centre) officially opens the Family Day (pictured with Lisa Slattery and Carole Nealon of the Meningitis Trust)
2. Surprise! One of the Zoo's residents pays a special visit!
3. Grrr! I'm a tiger! Callum Butler (Clare) joins in the fun.
4. Volunteer Maeve paints Alannah Bligh (Roscommon)
5. Happy Meningitis Trust guests and staff
6. Adam and Karen Jordan (Dublin).

Meningitis Trust continues free services in 2009, thanks to your continued support

The Meningitis Trust believes that financial considerations should never deter anyone from seeking help if they are worried or affected by meningitis, and so all our services are provided free of charge. These includes counselling, one-to-one and Community Nurse visits, and the 24 Hour nurse-led Helpline, as well as a range of awareness and education programmes nationwide.

Even during the best of economic times, the Trust received NO statutory government funding, and it was due to the on-going

support of ordinary people, businesses and grant making bodies that we have survived thus far. To everyone who has helped us to date, including our corporate partners National Irish Bank, Halfords and Topaz, thank you.

In 2009, with ever-increasing demands for our services and no statutory funding, we are urging individuals and communities throughout Ireland to work with us once again so that people who need our help now and in the future can continue to receive it.

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We need to raise a minimum of €350,000 this year, so if you know of any companies who might be interested in working with us, or would like to make a once-off or regular gift yourself, or take part/organise an event, we'd love to hear from you.

Below are some examples of how ordinary people in Ireland have helped the Trust in the past months. While space does not allow us to thank everyone by name, please be assured that we are extremely grateful to all our supporters.

If you'd like to help immediately, we're just a mouse-click away! Donate on-line via www.meningitis-trust.ie

For a full list of events, or to share your ideas, please contact Ger Mills, Development Officer at the Meningitis Trust on (090) 6450531 or germills@meningitis-trust.ie, or log on to our website www.meningitis-trust.ie, and thanks again.

Cian's Story

In October 2007, at the age of 17, Cian survived bacterial meningitis. In 2008, he and his family bravely agreed to share their story, and, via a personal letter from Cian, every secondary school pupil in Ireland got a chance to learn how meningitis could suddenly affect them and their family. The Murphys' generous decision to share their personal story meant that the Trust was able to distribute thousands of 'Signs and Symptoms' cards to concerned students (these cost just 3 cents to print, but could save a life).

Another outcome was that principals in school throughout Ireland now have information about where to turn for help should meningitis ever affect their pupils or community. And much needed funds were also raised for the Meningitis Trust when a number of the schools decided to hold fundraising events in aid of the charity. Thank you all.

To read Cian's story, or see his latest efforts in aid of the Trust – a sky-dive in April 2009! – just follow the link to our website: www.meningitis-trust.ie

Or, if like Cian, you also have a story you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you. Call Carole on (01) 276 2050 or email: carolen@meningitis-trust.ie



Cian (centre) pictured with his brothers and sisters.

Recent/Upcoming Events:

Recent events and supporter-organised highlights are featured on our website at www.meningitis-trust.ie and include:

Aoibhe Carroll Rainbow Walk

Siobhan and Noel Carroll are planning a special fun day on 27th June in Oranmore in memory of their daughter Aoibhe who died on 2nd April 2008. The family and their friends have already raised €7,500 for the Trust, the proceeds of a table quiz at the Clayton Hotel. Further details about Aoibhe's walk will be in the local press, or if you could like to support the family's efforts right now, go to <http://www.mycharity.ie/event/aoibhesrainbow/>.

Country and Western Gala

Leighlinbridge, 11 March 2009. With thanks to Martina Maher and her foot-tapping, fun-loving dancing supporters! The night raised over €1,700.

Volunteers Needed for Challenge and Running Events

If you have registered for a running event (eg Flora Dublin Mini Marathon, Cork, Dingle or Limerick Marathon), or would consider taking part in a Skydive or other challenge event to raise much-needed funds for the Meningitis Trust, please contact us for your free Event Pack on (01) 2764269 or eolas@meningitis-trust.ie.

Magic Mums Ball

Radisson SAS Hotel, Athlone, March 28th 2009 – a fantastic charity ball which benefitted the Meningitis Trust and CARI, with host Marty Whelan and entertainment by the fantastic Long John Jump Band. The event was organised and run by on-line mums group www.magicmums.com. And the committee are still working away on a follow-up monster raffle!



Marty Whelan recently hosted the Magic Mums Ball.

Golf Classic

Derry, April 25th. The second annual '4 Baby Oisín' cross border golf classic. With sincere thanks to Peter, Juliet, Daragh and all involved. Great to see you had another successful day!

Toddle Waddle and Mellow Yellow

Two fun events, one for the under 5's, the other for everyone else! If you want to chill out, have some fun and raise some much needed money for the Meningitis Trust, Toddle Waddle or Mellow Yellow could be the answer!



Ireland participates in first ever World Meningitis Day

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The Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) was formed in 2004 to bring together local organisations from all over the world who are speaking out to raise awareness about meningitis and the need to be vaccinated, and to amplify those voices. It now has members in 19 countries across Europe (including the Meningitis Trust in Ireland), North and South America, Australia, the Philippines and Africa.

Saturday 25th April 2009 was designated as the first ever World Meningitis Day when people around the world were asked to 'join hands against meningitis' online at (www.comoonline.org) to draw attention to this disease and its devastating effects. The Meningitis Trust and the Meningitis Research Foundation released a joint press statement about it. It is hoped that World Meningitis Day will become an annual event.

The event co-incided with the end of Immunisation Week, a campaign supported by many organisations and health professionals, which encourages people to avail of safe and widely available vaccines which help to prevent some of the world's most serious illnesses.



Broadcaster and mum of eight Miriam O'Callaghan helps launch World Meningitis Day

Meningitis Trust welcomes introduction of Pneumococcal Vaccine

After more than 3 years of campaigning by the Meningitis Trust and others, the HSE introduced a pneumococcal vaccine into the immunisation schedule in September 2008 with a catch up programme for all children under 2. This vaccine protects children against diseases caused by the pneumococcal bacteria, which include pneumonia, meningitis, septicaemia, middle ear infections, sinusitis and bronchitis. We are especially grateful to everyone who supported our efforts, signed the postcard campaign or

helped in any way towards this successful outcome, and Wyeth, for the Education grant which made it possible for us to print advice leaflets and hold a launch event.

It is estimated that it will save up to 132 lives in the country each year. We would encourage parents of young children to see their doctor about having their child vaccinated (the pneumococcal vaccine is free to all children born after 1 September 2006). For more information on vaccines log onto www.immunisation.ie

“The Pneumococcal vaccine can save up to 132 lives each year.”



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