



**A world free  
from MND**



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# NEWSLETTER



## Geraldine Takes To The Sky

When 71-year-old Geraldine Brennan's grandchildren asked her if there was anything she would like to do in her life that she hadn't already done and she told them "I'd love to jump out of a plane". Her wish came true when on Christmas morning she opened her card and found a photograph of herself jumping out of a plane. This was something she had always thought would be fun to do and now she had the opportunity to fulfil her dream.

Geraldine's husband, Eamon, was diagnosed with MND last year so she decided to use the opportunity to raise money for the MND Association. To date Geraldine has raised over £14,000 for the Northern Ireland Branch.

The skydive eventually took place in April at the Wild Geese parachute centre in Garvagh, Co. Londonderry and Eamon, their children and grandchildren were all to see her complete her lifetime ambition.



## Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, as usual since the last edition a lot has taken place and our thanks go out to all those hard working fund raisers for their efforts. One event of note was our first Afternoon Tea event which took place in Dobbies Garden Centre, and thanks to them for their support. We have been trying for some time to get a group together for an event like this and it was a great success. so much so that another is planned for this month, details in this newsletter. We would like to have similar events in other parts of the province so send us your suggestions please. *Stephen*



**Are you a volunteer? We would love to hear from you! Contact Marie via email: [marie@mndani.com](mailto:marie@mndani.com)**

## Meet Our Volunteers



**Alana Hughes** is one of our young volunteers who has been involved in organising a number of events over the last year and has now joined the NI Branch Committee as our Campaign Contact.

My name is Alana Hughes, I'm a 22-year old from Belfast, and MNDA fundraiser. My stepdad was diagnosed with MND over four years ago, and for the first while it didn't sink in as his symptoms were slow. Once it started to become more noticeable, I got increasingly infuriated that I couldn't get into a lab to research a cure. I started to get involved by using Twitter to promote awareness - I wanted everyone to know about MND and I didn't want to have to keep explaining about the disease.

I want to do more so I am always looking to the next task. I've chased down Lord Mayors in the street to sign the Charter, used Facebook to rally 50+ supporters together to see Belfast City Hall lit up in the MND Association colours on Global Awareness Day (thanks to the wonderful Jennifer Maloney), taken part in three very cold Ice Bucket Challenges for local radio, TV and print, started a blog which has reached as far as Vietnam.

Recently I organised collections for MNDA in the Movie House Cinema, Dublin Road, Belfast during screenings of *The Theory of Everything* and hosted a Quiz Night in aid of the NI Branch in March.

The support I've received in fundraising efforts has blown me away and it wouldn't be possible without that support. My stepdad is my motivation to continue planning these events and raising awareness, and they'll keep coming until there's a cure. *Alana*



## Manchester Regional Conference

These have replaced the 'Spring Conferences' but retain a similar format. Compared to the AGM they have more presentations and less of the red tape necessary for an AGM. Manchester is easy to fly to with a good choice of flights from NI airports. The conference hotel was located at the airport with less than 15 minutes alone with a covered walkway. In addition to the presentations there were a number of exhibitors, the two most popular were speech aids and wheelchairs. There was plenty of time to talk to exhibitors and other attendees.

In the morning, '**Plans for the Future**' and '**Campaigning for Better Services**' were covered every enthusiastically and highlighted just what can be achieved through social media. In the afternoon, we had the most popular presentation, 'Latest Research Developments.' Everyone left with a better understanding of research and renewed hope with a number of promising developments and a staggering number of research activities being worked on around the world.

The conference finished at 4pm, allowing time to enjoy a leisurely coffee before checking in at the airport. You can view the conference at <http://livestream.com/eventstreamingcompany/mnda>

I would urge you to have a look at the conference on the web and consider attending the Regional Conference later this year, or more likely, next year. The Branch will meet the cost for anyone with MND and a carer to attend and there may be members of the committee attending who will assist you on your journey.



## Afternoon Tea at Dobbies

On 21<sup>st</sup> April we held our first get-together for people living with MND and their families/carers and were delighted to welcome over 20 people. Those who attended were treated to Afternoon Tea and a demonstration by Paul assisted by Aimee of how to plan a lovely planter. This planter was then raffled and Miriam was the lucky winner.

Everybody enjoyed the opportunity to meet others and chat about a whole range of topics and many plan to attend the next one on 17<sup>th</sup> June when we look forward to welcoming people who were unable to attend this first event. We are very grateful to Helen McClean, RCDA, and to Fiona, Amanda, Anne and Marie, some of our Association Visitors, who were also able to attend. We hope you will be able to join us on 17<sup>th</sup> June at Dobbies.

"Yesterday's Afternoon Tea at Dobbies was very much enjoyed by us. An afternoon event was great and it was good to meet new folk and watch Dobbie's answer to Monty Don! Many thanks to the MND Association."



## Photo Gallery

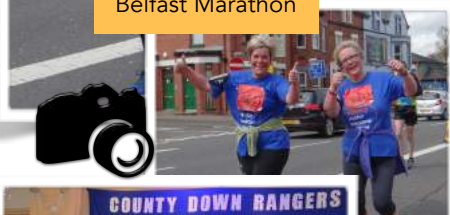


Belfast Marathon Cheer Team

Belfast Marathon



Banbridge Fun Run



Co. Down Rangers Supporters Club



Antrim Rovers charity football match, BBQ and fun night



Gospel Concert cheque presentation by Dorothy Thompson and Isabel Walker



Comber Primary P6 pupils organised a bun sale and also sold loom bands to raise money for MND Research

Jennifer's puppy, Sadie, makes her Twitter debut to raise awareness #PetSelfie



We invite you to join us  
for  
**Afternoon Tea**  
at  
Dobbies Garden Centre, Lisburn  
courtesy of the NI Branch  
for people living with MND and  
their families/carers  
on

**Wednesday 17th June**

2.30pm - 4.00 pm

Please let Marie know if you plan to attend and if you have any special dietary requirements.

Contact:

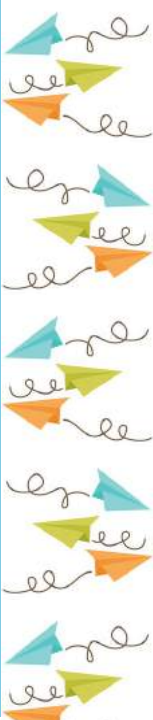
[marie@mndani.com](mailto:marie@mndani.com)

### Northern Ireland Branch AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Northern Ireland Branch took place on 31st March 2015 in the Island Centre, Lisburn. There was a very good attendance even though some people were unable to attend at the last minute. We were pleased to welcome Jo Cunnah, our new Volunteer Development Co-Ordinator, and Chris Bennett, Regional Delivery Manager. Stephen Thompson, Chairman, reported that once again the people of Northern Ireland had been generous in their fundraising and the branch was able to provide additional care and support to people living with MND. Hugh Groves, Treasurer, presented the financial report that showed that the branch was in a very healthy position.

The current committee were re-elected. We are also pleased to welcome a new committee member, Alana Hughes, who has been very active raising awareness and campaigning for people living with MND. Jo Cunnah made presentations to Siobhan Rooney and Tony Carroll in recognition of their service to the branch and who have been committee members for five years. Eleanor Smyth, Association Visitor, also received a five year award in recognition of her support for people living with MND in the west of NI.

Chris Wade, MND Association's Director of Care, gave a very interesting presentation on the Ice Bucket Challenge that raised over seven million pounds for the Association and explained how this additional money would be spent. The evening concluded with refreshments and members and guests were able to socialise with friends old and new.



### Ask Arthur

**Did you know that many attractions offer free admission to your carer?** National Trust (including the Giant's Causeway), most cinemas, many theatres, Belfast Zoo, Titanic Experience, Belfast Giants any many others offer this. Just ask when you book!

If you are ever asked, a copy of your letter showing you are eligible for disability benefits is normally accepted as proof that you are disabled. Alternatively, you could show a copy of your blue badge or your disabled TransLink pass. You can apply for a card from the **Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA)** that gives one free ticket to anyone accompanying you to the cinema. See [www.ceacard.co.uk](http://www.ceacard.co.uk) for more details. The National Trust have a similar scheme with the **'Admit One'** card, see [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) for more details.

Have you a favourite place to visit? Why not tell others about it? Just email a short article to [mndani@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mndani@hotmail.co.uk) *Arthur*



### Marie's 'Silence Speaks' Challenge

June is MND Awareness month and this year the theme is 'Silence Speaks' as the MND Association wants to raise awareness that people with MND can lose their voice permanently. Our Branch secretary, Marie Holmes, is fundraising by being silent for an hour every day during June. Please support her.

**Text GMND65 £2 or £5 or £10 to 70070**  
<https://www.justgiving.com/SilentMarie>



### Contact us...

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### Lap the Lough

Anne Sleith, one of our Association Visitors, is taking part in the Lap the Lough cycle ride at the end of August to raise money for the Northern Ireland Branch. Please support her by donating through her JustGiving page.  
<http://www.justgiving.com/owner-email/pleasesponsor/AnneandAnn>



S.J. Davidson, Dungannon are celebrating 50 years in business by holding a draw for a Porsche. Tickets are on sale at <http://www.sj davidsonmotors.co.uk>

Newry City Darts Open at Bellini's on Saturday 28th August

This is your newsletter so please let us have your contributions. These can be about fundraising, personal experiences; photographs of events and any other information that you think might be of interest to our members.  
**Email: [mndani@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mndani@hotmail.co.uk)**