

WINTER 2017

# SPINAL NEWS

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John Twomey hosts the  
first Cork Jazz Ball



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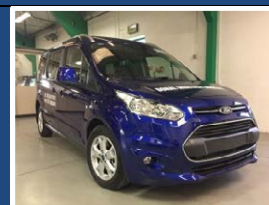
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## WELCOME

With the year drawing to a close, we would first of all like to wish all our service users and family members a very happy Christmas and peaceful new year.

Looking back over 2017, we have had a busy year here at spinal Injuries Ireland. We held a number of events, campaigns, and regional meetings to continually provide as much support as possible to our service users around the country.

The organisation was particularly delighted to take part in the annual meeting of the International Scientific Committee of spinal Cord Injury (ISCoS) which took place in Citywest in October this year.

Over 1,000 medics, support staff and consumers from around the world attended the meeting and as the CEO of SII I presented at an International Consumer workshop. We were delighted to work closely with the NRH spinal Team who also gave presentations at the meeting.

Following on from the success of ISCoS, SII is delighted to announce that we plan on hosting our first ever SCI Patient Conference called 'My Life - Care & Cure' which will take place in April 2018.

There will be a range of speakers at the event from the medical and SCI communities. All our service users will be invited to attend, and it promises to be a very informative and enlightening conference.

Lastly, after 24 years based in the NRH, spinal Injuries Ireland has moved off campus to facilitate the building of the new hospital. We are currently in temporary accommodation but early in 2018 we will be moving to our new Resource Centre on Pottery Road, Dun Laoghaire, just behind the NRH.

We are looking forward to welcoming our service users into our new resource centre in 2018 and we are hoping that you will all drop in and see us.

We hope you have a lovely Christmas and we look forward to an exciting year ahead in 2018.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Bolger CEO



## CONTENTS

4	News - SII's new premises, Patient event
5	News - Summer Raffle, Cork Jazz Ball
6	News - Les Wright Skydives
8	Services - Roisin Hackett Sailing Bursary
10	Feature - Rob O'Byrne Becoming a personal trainer
12	Story - Gerry McCabe exoskeleton suit
14	Fundraising
16	Health feature - Buying a mobility car
18	SII services - Outreach officer Glenn
19	SII services - Brendan Glynn in Cork
20	Story - John O'Brien - returning to the gym
22	Story - Eamon Tilley Paralympics training
23	Health feature - Pacing & Pain by Eileen Hopkins
24	Gallery

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This magazine contains features of real life and SII does not endorse any products and services listed within.





## SII SUMMER RAFFLE WINNERS

Our SII Summer Raffle was a great success this year and we would like to thank everyone who got involved and sold tickets in aid of Spinal Injuries Ireland.

Thanks to Windsor Motors in Liffey Valley, who sponsored our Summer Raffle, we had some amazing prizes on offer to four lucky people.

Three of our winners are pictured below receiving their cheques.

Arthur Hogan and his wife Bridget, who has a spinal cord injury, were the winners of our top prize of €5,000. Congratulations to Arthur & Bridget!

The winner of our second prize of €2,000 was Des Fenelon from Rathgar who was unavailable for a photograph but was delighted to receive his cheque.

Lastly, the winner of our third prize of €1,000 was Sinead Peacocke from Shankill. Her son Jamie sold the winning ticket so Sinead happily received the cheque on his behalf.



In addition, the Top Seller of our Summer Raffle for the second year in a row was Joe Murphy from Dublin. Joe took home a cheque for €500 as our Top Seller.

Thanks to everyone who got involved with our Summer Raffle this year, we were delighted with all the support we received.

## A NEW RESOURCE CENTRE FOR SII IN DUN LAOGHAIRE

Over the past few months SII has developed a new Resource Centre adjacent to the NRH, with support from the HSE. The reason we have moved is to facilitate the building works for the new hospital.

We are delighted with our new Resource Centre and we look forward to welcoming our service users to the premises once we are fully settled in the new year.

Our new address is Spinal Injuries Ireland Resource Centre, Unit 3, Pottery Road Business Park, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. If you would like more information you can call us on our new number 01 653 2180.

## SCI CONFERENCE - SAVE THE DATE

SII has some very exciting news for all our service users as we will be holding our first ever SCI patient conference in April 2018.

The conference which will be entitled 'My Life - Care & Cure' will see a host of international speakers from the medical and SCI community. It will be open to all our service users and their family members to attend and will be an informative and enlightening day.

We will be announcing the date of the conference across our social media outlets and via our monthly Ezine in the coming months so make sure to keep an eye out for it.

If you would like more information on this conference, please call Spinal Injuries Ireland on (01) 6532180.



### Paralympian John Twomey holds inaugural Cork Jazz Ball in aid of SII

Ireland's most decorated Paralympian athlete John Twomey, along with a committee of volunteers, organised The Cork Jazz Ball in aid of Spinal Injuries Ireland at the Clayton Silver Springs Hotel in Cork on Saturday 28th October.

The event was a fantastic black-tie evening that featured a prosecco reception, a four-course meal with wine, prizes, music and dancing until the early hours.

On the night, well-known jazz group The Swing Cats took to the stage and they had people on the dance floor until the early hours.

John Twomey, who competed as a sailor in 11 Paralympic Games since 1984, decided to organise the ball as he saw first-hand the important work SII carry out in his local community.

"SII provides an amazing service to 214 people and their families in Cork and over 1,800 people nationwide. It is so important that people living with SCIs continue to have access to the services that Spinal Injuries Ireland provide within the community. It is vital for people living with disabilities in Cork that these services not only continue but expand on a much larger level."

Next year's Cork Jazz Ball is already in the planning stages and will take place on Saturday October 27th 2018.

For more information on how to get tickets for next year's ball, email [kevin@spinalinjuries.ie](mailto:kevin@spinalinjuries.ie)

Turn to page 26 of the magazine to see a gallery of images from the Cork Jazz Ball this year.





## SKYDIVING FOR SII

### **Les Wright, who has a C5/C6 spinal cord injury, fulfilled a life-long dream this year when he completed a skydive**

.....

Les Wright, from Killarney, is on a mission to complete a list of life-long dreams since he turned 60 recently and in August this year, he ticked one of those dreams off his list when he completed a skydive from 12,000ft.

Les, who has two daughters Ciara and Grainne with his wife Trish, decided to do the skydive with his daughter Grainne and his wife's nephew Jason, and they all took the plunge together at the Irish Parachute Club in Offaly.

He explained, "When I turned 60 last December it kind of flicked a switch and I decided I needed to do some of the things I wanted to do before I got too much older. Life passes in the blink of an eye and the older I get, the more I know I won't be able to do the physical side of things as much."

Les, who sustained a C5/C6 spinal cord injury (SCI) in September 1982 following a car crash, said that he did have some reservations initially about doing the skydive as he has a high level SCI, but he did his research and found a sky diving company that he trusted.

"I looked into it and found the Irish Parachute Club. I rang up and spoke to them about doing the skydive and they told me that they had two experienced sky divers (also known as tandem masters) who had jumped with a good few disabled people previously. I thought right, if they have done it with people before then that gives me the confidence to give it a bash."

On the day of the skydive, Les explained that he had no fear on the



**“I was sitting at the door and looking out and I thought ‘Oh my God what am I doing here?!’”**



journey up in the plane but at the last minute, when they opened the airplane door, his nerves kicked in a little bit.

"I was sitting at the door and looking out and I thought 'Oh my God what am I doing here?!' and then they opened the door and lifted my legs out and I thought 'Oh right, well this is it now.' The next thing, my tandem master counted down 1,2,3 go and we were out.

"It doesn't feel like you're falling at first because you're above the clouds so you can't see the ground. You're falling towards the clouds which is really cool. Then you go through the cloud layer and then shortly after that he pulled the shoot and the next thing you're sailing. It's so quiet and peaceful when you're coming down and I studied the countryside. My tandem master let me have a go at the toggles as best I could so I was flying our parachute at one stage. You pull one side and the shoot goes down and then you pull the other side and it turns the other way. It was a bit difficult because I couldn't get hold of it properly but it was a great experience. Then we just kept sailing down and before I knew it we had landed."

Les explained that the only part he felt a little bit worried about was landing because he couldn't hold his legs up when they were coming

towards the ground. His tandem master knew how to get around this though.

"He taped my feet together at the ankles so they wouldn't go flying everywhere so that was a good idea. As we were coming in, my legs were dangling below me and I thought 'Oh no, I'm going to break my legs here!' But somehow my toes dug into the turf and my tandem master just flipped it around so I ended up on top of him. So it was a perfect landing."

Les said he would recommend doing a skydive to anyone thinking of doing it as he had such a good time.

"It was an amazing experience. The Irish Parachute Club have really good people working there. They were excellent with me. I can't say enough good things about them. They were good fun, we had a bit of a laugh and I wouldn't hesitate to do it again."

Les also kindly did the skydive in aid of Spinal Injuries Ireland and raised an amazing €2,000 which will go towards families and people living with SCIs in Ireland.

**For more information on the Irish Parachute Club see [www.skydive.ie](http://www.skydive.ie) or call Spinal Injuries Ireland for more information on 01 6532180.**



**“ When I turned 60 last December it kind of flicked a switch and I decided I needed to do some of the things I wanted to do before I got too much older. ”**







## SAILING ON THE SEAS IN A TALLSHIP

### **Róisín Hackett was awarded a sailing bursary through Spinal Injuries Ireland and Sail Training Ireland to go on adventure of a lifetime last summer**

At 4am on July 27th this year, myself and my best friend Róisín Neville, who is from Cork, were swept away in a dark grey taxi to Dublin airport to begin an adventure we would never forget.

I met Róisín two years ago, prior to my spinal cord injury (SCI), on board the Morgenster tall ship and we were excited to once again be heading away to sail together.

I sustained my spinal cord injury in 2015 when I was 17, following a spinal fusion revision surgery that went wrong. This resulted in me sustaining an L1 SCI due to Cauda Equina Syndrome. For the past two years I've been focusing on balancing my recovery and academics, such as sitting my Leaving Certificate a month after being discharged from the NRH and starting my undergrad in Trinity College. This trip marked the first time I took to the sea on board a ship since my injury.

Our trip began with myself and Róisín heading to Corner Brook, Newfoundland, to join the accessible tall ship 'The Lord

Nelson', which is owned by the Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST).

The Lord Nelson is unique in that she is one of the world's only two accessible ships, the other being JST's second ship - the Tenacious.

Spinal Injuries Ireland and Sail Training Ireland worked together with JST to develop a bursary scheme to provide funding for people with spinal cord injuries, and a friend, to sail on board the Lord Nelson.

The many special facilities of the Lord Nelson include wide decks for wheelchair users, hoists to enable wheelchair users to climb the mast, assisted climbs for those with mobility impairments, stair lifts, a speaking compass to enable blind people to helm the ship, power assisted hydraulic steering for those with limited strength and much more.

All of these facilities allow disabled crewmembers to take an active part in the running of the ship. The Lord Nelson is a place where disability does not exist

and she has inspired me to get involved in making the non-sailing world more accessible too.

The plan for our trip was to head to Newfoundland, where we would then set sail for eight days and finish up in Nova Scotia, Canada. We had no idea what we were in for!

The journey to Newfoundland was half the adventure in itself! We flew to St. John's, on the East coast of Newfoundland and stayed there for eight hours. We made friends with a local taxi driver who dropped us to all the local sights.

We then headed to Halifax, Nova Scotia and after 24 hours of travelling, we finally ended up in a small town called Corner Brook on the West Coast of Newfoundland.

We ended up staying in Corner Brook for five days. We spent the first two days recovering from the journey, wandering around the Canadian wilderness while keeping an eye out for bears, and making



friends with almost everyone in the village. They were very excited to have tourists around! We also explored the local culture which was strangely familiar, with songs such as Auld Triangle, Dirty Old Town and The Black Velvet Band being played in shops and pubs around the village.

On the third day, we went aboard the Lord Nelson for the first time. I had previously sailed on a tall ship prior to my injury but I was apprehensive over how I would fare with my new disability. I was worried I would feel left out, or worse, be babied by the other crew.

I could not have been more wrong, however, as we were welcomed on board with open arms. The first person we met was a bubbly Cork woman and I felt at home immediately.

We spent the next three days aboard the Lord Nelson in Corner Brook and we gave the locals many guided tours around our new home. The tours were an interesting way of interacting with locals from all around Newfoundland and it was great to hear all about their Irish heritage. People had travelled from near and far to visit our beautiful ship. We were also joined by the Barque Europa and The Bowden, an American maritime college schooner, all taking part in the Rendezvous 2017.

Those three days on board the Lord Nelson were slow as we were still in port but they allowed us to get to know each other before the hustle and bustle of sailing together which was great.

Over the course of the three days we learned all about the Lord Nelson and how we would sail her over the next eight days. We started with the basics, as most of the 40-voyage crew had no experience of life on board a tall ship.

On our last night in Corner Brook, we celebrated by watching a beautiful fireworks display and there was a music concert on the docks too. Afterwards we headed to a local bar to engage in a local tradition which may or may not have involved kissing a cod, learning a Newfie tongue twister and taking a shot of local whiskey.

After the three days of training were completed, we set sail on August 1st, with a busy schedule ahead. We got our watch timetables which consisted of two 4hr shifts per day. Included in these shifts were tasks to keep the ship running such as helming (steering the ship), lookout duty (watching for any nearby ships that might not use a radar), mess duty (helping the ship's cook to prepare the Michelin star worthy meals), setting up for dinner and waiter duty. We also had to clean the ship everyday, with jobs suited to everyone's ability. The days at sea blurred into one, as we were sleeping twice a day between watches. Considering I have bad balance on dry land, the rocky sea was another

level of bad balance altogether, but it was do-able, with the help of the stair lifts on board.

Due to the fact that I had spinal surgery three months before our voyage, I couldn't help with bracing the sails as it involved pulling heavy ropes. So I spent most of my working days up at the helm, steering the ship to the first mates orders, while everyone else worked up a sweat tugging away on the ropes.

As part of our journey we visited the coastal fishing village of Burgeo, Newfoundland which has a population of about 600 people. The people who lived there had the strangest accent I've ever heard. It was a sort of Kerry-Texas hybrid! We spent the day wandering around its fairytale landscape, enjoying the local cuisine which was deep fried everything, and we finished the day on one of Burgeo's beautiful secluded beaches.

On our last day, we arrived into Nova Scotia on an extremely hot day and all the locals were waiting eagerly for our arrival. We spent the day giving tours of our tall ship and that evening we headed to a local Irish pub where we enjoyed a meal together. The crew from another ship called the Bowden, who we had made friends with while in Corner Brook, also joined us.

After drinking many pints (bought for us by our older crewmates) and singing plenty of sea shanties together, we headed back to our ship for one last night of being rocked to sleep. The next morning, we tearily said goodbye to our new worldwide friends and made a promise that we'd be on their couches before they knew it.

Myself and Róisín then caught a flight to Toronto for a more relaxed time than the previous eight days, where we went to Niagara Falls, Toronto University - to scope it out for a possible Erasmus year - and many a market.

The people we met on board the Lord Nelson were an eclectic mix - there were British army cadets, Yorkshire bakers, French-Canadian scientists, people with autism, people with MS and people with spinal cord injuries. We all had one thing in common, however - our passion for sailing.

As part of our experience sailing with the Lord Nelson, each able-bodied person on board was paired or 'buddied' with someone with a disability. This was life



**“ The plan was to set sail for eight days and finish up in Nova Scotia, Canada. We had no idea what we were in for! ”**

changing in itself as it allowed us to help able bodied people understand the ins and outs of a disability that often seem so alien to them. I was so lucky that my buddy was my best friend Róisín. I'm more or less independent, but she helped hugely with travelling to Canada, navigating airports, carrying my bags, and most importantly making me pace myself and rest whenever she could see I was pushing myself too hard.

To narrow down my favourite time on board to one moment, it would have to be when we were sailing out of the bay at Burgeo. There was a pink sun setting and a Lord of the Rings-esque mist descended on our recently discovered fishing village. At that moment, we were joined by a pod of dolphins swimming alongside us and there were also a few whales in the distance. Being up on helm while all of this was unfolding, the rush of the sea breeze mixed with the independence and power I felt in that moment is something I don't think I will ever forget.

My time on board the Lord Nelson was surprisingly emotional. After my injury, I had completely ruled out the option of returning to tall ship sailing because I knew how physically taxing it was even as an able bodied person. Climbing the stairs, let alone the mast, heaving the ropes and the early mornings were things I thought I would not be able to do, however, the Lord Nelson allowed me to do all of these things.

Returning to sail on a tall ship made me feel like I had regained a chunk of my pre-SCI life that I so often mourn. It made me feel powerful, independent and able, but most importantly it gave me memories that I will never ever forget.





## ROB O'BYRNE – BECOMING A PERSONAL TRAINER

### Rob O'Byrne went back to college to become a personal trainer following his spinal cord injury

Rob O'Byrne (29) from Dublin, recently opened his own personal training gym where he trains people who have spinal cord injuries (SCI) or any other type of disability.

Rob, who sustained a C5/C6 spinal cord injury 12 years ago following a swimming pool accident, decided to go back to college to become a personal trainer in 2013 as he wanted to learn more about exercise as a form of recovery.

The circumstances that led to Rob going back to college, however, are little more unusual than most.

He explained: "In 2013, I was the first person in Ireland to undergo a successful tendon transfer operation to regain more mobility in my arms. I was re-admitted back into the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) for the second time to recover.

"After I was discharged from the NRH in 2013, I went to a commercial gym

to get active but the personal trainers I met didn't understand the rehabilitation I'd been through."

Rob decided to look into different forms of exercise and eventually found TRX (Total Resistance Training).

"I started with a personal trainer and we messed around with the equipment until we found a routine that worked. It ended up opening my eyes to different ways people in wheelchairs, those with brain injuries, stroke injuries and the blind, can





exercise. It inspired me to try find a way to get the word out there.”

Since he qualified as a personal trainer, Rob has built a small home gym, which is wheelchair accessible, and he is now able to offer people personal training in a space where they won't feel overwhelmed.

“I want to give people with disabilities access to a personal trainer – someone who understands where they are coming from and who understands their needs, to give them the one-on-one attention they need.

“Exercise is a key part of regaining mobility for people living with spinal cord injuries and it is a pleasure to work with people with different types of disabilities to help them achieve their mobility and strength goals.”

Rob now helps people with all kinds of injuries get back into training from his home in Tallaght and he says that he will continue to advocate exercise as the number one form of physical recovery for spinal injury patients.

**If you would like to contact Rob for a personal training session you can call or text him on 0863591317 or alternatively, you can keep up to date with Rob on his Facebook page ‘What’s Your Excuse Fitness’.**



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## WALKING HIS WAY BACK TO HEALTH

### Gerry McCabe wants to share his Ekso Bionic suit to help people with disabilities regain better mobility

Gerry McCabe from Offaly has an incredible story to tell as he privately owns a robotic machine called an Ekso Bionic suit which allows him to walk without the use of his legs.

Gerry now wants to share his Ekso Bionic suit, affectionately named Hughie after his beloved father who passed away in 2004, and he hopes that it will be helpful to people with spinal cord injuries and other neurological problems such as incomplete SCI, stroke, MS, and Cystic Fibrosis.

Gerry (57) sustained a T11/T12 spinal cord injury in May 2004 when he was erecting the steel structure of a roof on a farm building and fell.

He explained, "One Saturday evening I

was finishing off a bit of steel roofing and I was taking sheets off my son. He was giving me a hand for the evening, but all of sudden I slipped and fell off the roof down onto the ground. That was it, it all happened in a split second."

At the time Gerry was 44 and he explains that being told he was paralysed from the waist down changed his world forever.

"I spent four and a half months in the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH), but thank God for the staff there because they taught me how to live with a spinal injury. They were amazing."

Gerry spent the following eight years getting back to work and adjusting to life as a wheelchair user.

In 2012, however, life took an exciting twist when he was chatting to a friend of his at his house one day about a story he had read in Spinal News magazine about a man who came to the NRH to demonstrate how the Ekso Bionic suit worked.

"I was telling him all about this Ekso Bionic suit, and saying 'Wow, is this the way it's going to go for people with spinal injuries?' He was taking it all in but he didn't say anything to me at the time.

"He went away and met up with a few of my other really good friends and they formed a committee. They decided that they were going to fundraise €150,000 to buy the suit for me. They even knew what they were going to do and how they were going to raise the money."

Over the coming weeks, Gerry's friends came to his house and told him what they planned to do.

"I couldn't believe it. I told them they were so good to do this for me. I knew it was an opportunity of a lifetime that I would never be able to afford to do on my own. So on they went, and they raised the money, and would you believe it, they did it in a little over three months!

"It was absolutely amazing, it's bringing tears to my eyes thinking about it even now."

Gerry then linked in with Spinal Injuries Ireland and also a lady called Jane Evans from RollingBall (now Accuscience), the Irish representative for the Ekso Bionic Suit.



**“ It was absolutely amazing, it's bringing tears to my eyes thinking about it even now ”**





Jane explained: "The early exoskeleton, Ekso 1.1 was too narrow for Gerry's hips, and weight had crept up on Gerry. The suit has a max weight limit of 100kg. Gerry was told he had to lose 20kg in weight, which is not easy for a wheelchair user, but he decided he was going to put everything into it and lose the weight."

Gerry said: "I exercised regularly using a respiratory training device, SpiroTiger, and I pushed myself up and down my road every day. I changed my diet too and I did it, I lost the 20kg."

Having lost 20kg and with the introduction of the new Ekso GT with a variable hip width, Gerry passed all the criteria for walking in Ekso.

Gerry and his wife Dolores travelled down to Cork and met Jane at Elite Gym in Cork where Nathan Kirwan, who has a SCI and is the founder of the charity Helpful Steps, had set up a public access robotic walking service, the first service of its type in the world. Happily for Gerry, this trip was very successful.

"That day was something else. The first time in the suit was fantastic. The biggest thing for me was just to stand up again and be able to look into people's eyes. That was a big thing for me. At 6ft 2" I was used to looking down

from a height at people before my injury, so it was great not to have a creak in my neck looking up at people for the first time in years. Then just to take off walking, Christ to feel your legs moving again. It was unreal."

From there, Gerry ordered his own suit from Jane Evans and he now proudly uses it to walk as much as he can every week.

"I have it here in the house with me all the time. The local people were very good to me here in Cloghan & Belmont and they gave me the key of the local community hall and said 'Just keep walking.' So I have access to the hall any time I want and I love it there."

Gerry's two sons, Kevin (30) and Stephen (28), along with his wife Dolores are all trained to walk with him in the Ekso suit and with their help he walks as much as he can each week.

"What I love about my suit is it's not a one-day wonder for me. It wasn't like we did the fundraiser and got the suit and said we'll see what happens. The more I have it, the more I love it and the more I want to walk."

Gerry explained that he has experienced massive health benefits through the use of the Ekso Bionic suit.

"It won't ever replace my chair, that's one thing, but I personally think it's fantastic with regard to kidney infections or anything to do with bowel movement, bladder problems, etc. I don't have any of those problems. When I get my check up every year at the NRH they say to me 'I don't know what you're doing because there's no kidney stones, there's no blockages, there's nothing.' So it's great."

"In terms of mobility, it has absolutely helped me. I find myself transferring much better than I used to and that kind of crept up on me. I used to find transferring sometimes quite difficult but now I transfer an awful lot better."

Gerry explained that prior to using his Ekso Bionic suit, he had very bad chronic pain and he had to take a lot of painkillers to ease the pain. Since using his suit however, that has all changed.

"That was the biggest thing in my life; even though I'm still quite sore and I get pain flair-ups, I'm now off all my medication. And that's down to walking."

"Prior to using the suit, I had slowed down completely from the way I used to be but, I found that once I started to walk, after about six months, I began to cut down slowly on my medication. I don't take any pain killers at all now and that's down to my three walks a week."

Gerry has his suit for over a year now and he explained that he would now like to give back in some way.

"I want to get him - 'Hughie' - out there and create awareness that these machines/robots are very good. It is working for me and it's actually the best robot that's out there at the moment. Nothing has come near it yet and to have that kind of technology here in the kitchen beside me is something else. Now I want to share it with other people in my area who have disabilities."

If you would like to try Gerry's Ekso Bionic suit, you first have to be assessed by a physio to see if you are eligible to use the suit. Gerry will hold an event in Cloghan, Co Offaly in the coming months which will be a walk-in service for people to come along, be assessed and then plan how and when they can use the suit.

**If you would like to contact Gerry to find out more information you can email him on [dandgmcabe@gmail.com](mailto:dandgmcabe@gmail.com) or call Spinal Injuries Ireland on 01 6532180 and we will put you in touch with him.**



## BBQ PARTY 2017!

The annual Spinal Injuries Ireland BBQ took place at Old Belvedere Rugby Club in September and it was a great success with over 300 people in attendance. SII would like to say a huge thank you to the group of volunteers that organised the night, including Geraldine Dargan, Marie Fitzpatrick, Kathriona O'Donnell, Joan Hoey, Marie Louise Mitchell, & Caroline Loughran.



## HOLLISTER RUN FOR SII!

Thanks so much to the staff at Hollister in Ballina, Co Mayo who organised a 10k walk/run at the end of July in aid of SII. We were delighted to partner with Hollister for the event and a great day was had by all. The staff raised over €5,000 which will go towards our core services.



**Let yours be a wonderful Christmas gift that creates happiness and goodness again and again all year round**

**Please pass this on to someone you think would like to support SII this Christmas!**

## YES! COUNT ME IN! ...

*Please post the below completed form to Spinal Injuries Ireland, NRH Campus, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire Co. Dublin or call 01 653 2180 to complete over the phone.*



Let yours be a helping hand all year round



Creditor Identification No.: IE79ZZZ360517

Unique Mandate Reference:

To be completed by Spinal Injuries Ireland

Supporting Spinal Injuries Ireland

I wish to make a monthly recurring donation of €10 ☐ €15 ☐ €21\* ☐ Other €

starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of  /  Year  until further notice as per the Direct Debit Mandate above.

By signing this mandate form, you authorise (A) Spinal Injuries Ireland to send instructions to your bank to debit your account and (B) your bank to debit your account in accordance with the instruction from Spinal Injuries Ireland.

As part of your rights, you are entitled to a refund from your bank under the terms and conditions of your agreement with your bank. A refund must be claimed within 8 weeks starting from the date on which your account was debited. Your rights are explained in a statement that you can obtain from your bank.

Supporter Details:

Name

Address

Account No. (IBAN)

Swift BIC

Creditor Name: Spinal Injuries Ireland, National Rehabilitation Hospital Campus, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. A96 A7P0

Payment Type: Recurrent ☐ One-Off ☐ (Please tick ✓)

Signature(s)

Date Signed:



# Will you help us spread hope in a very special way this Christmas?

For those of you who are not familiar with our work let me tell you that Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) is a 'not for profit' agency with the sole aim of providing support to people with spinal cord injuries.

**We also provide information and support to family members of people living with a spinal cord injury.**

**As part of our service we have six Community Outreach Officers** operating in six different areas of the country. These officers are available to all people with spinal cord injuries in Ireland. Their job is to meet our service users one-to-one in their homes, or in a place of their choosing, and offer support to them at every stage of their experience.

**As you can appreciate, these Community Outreach Officers are a hugely important part of our service.** And since we rely on donations from our supporters for a sizeable 61% of our funding we depend greatly on the friendship and support of friends like you to operate this service.

#### **This valuable service includes:**

- Providing or sourcing information for those with spinal injuries
- Linking people with spinal injuries to other services that they want to access
- Working closely with all our service users to help them to maximise their independence and quality of life.
- Helping those with spinal injuries to overcome barriers in their life
- Connecting those that we work with to others with similar circumstances
- Providing information and support to family members of our service users

**Our Christmas appeal for regular all-year-round donations is a hugely important part of our funding programme.**

**YES! COUNT ME IN! ...**



Aisling, Communications Officer  
Spinal Injuries Ireland

**"The support of my Community Outreach Officer has given me a new lease of life and has helped me in so many ways. It's hard to describe and put in words. I would be lost without the support and help I have received from her."**







## TOP 10 TIPS ON PURCHASING A WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE CAR

### Donal Murtagh, who runs Donal Murtagh Mobility Ltd, talks through the best way to find the right accessible car for you

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When it comes to buying a wheelchair accessible car many people are often new to the process and it can seem a bit overwhelming, but don't worry as help is at hand.

The first thing you should know is that no two people's needs are the same but this is not a problem as there are numerous different solutions available to meet the needs of each person. Or alternatively, a bespoke conversion can be designed to suit your individual needs.

#### Beware of Alternative Buying Options:

When choosing a wheelchair accessible vehicle or conversion we recommend consulting a Certified Mobility Dealer who will have years of experience in engineering mobility solutions and the required documentation process.

Online or private purchases can sometimes be risky as the car will not be tailored to your needs as it would have been from a reputable mobility company and you could incur hefty cost after you purchase or even worse the car may not be suitable at all. We caution you to check every aspect of the car if buying in this manner. Make sure you have the car inspected by a mechanic and purchase a car history check as your rights are very minimum when buying privately.

It's your money so spend it wisely with a company who will look after you long into the future, not just today.

You may have to keep the car for a number of years so take your time and make the right choice and seek out honest and experienced advice.

The following points are our top tips to assist you in acquiring the best vehicle and conversion to suit you and your family's needs.

#### Top 10 tips on Purchasing a Wheelchair Accessible Car

##### 1. Know your options

There is a wide range of vehicles and conversions available now for wheelchair passengers and disabled drivers including lowered floor vehicles, wheelchair lifts and helpful driving aids. With dozens of variations available for each conversion, we would highly recommend that you consult a reputable mobility advisor to discuss your options first as this may save you a lot of money in the end.



## 2. Involve the people you travel with

It's essential you bring the carer you regularly travel with for a test drive before you purchase the car. Your carer must be happy helping you into the vehicle, securing your wheelchair and driving the vehicle. Also consider the passengers who will be traveling in the car (How many seats do you need?). A good mobility company should be able to offer a range of seating layout options with different seat types and widths.

## 3. Have the measurements ready

Always make sure to have the measurements of the wheelchair when viewing. Preferably try the wheelchair in the car for size and comfort as conversions can greatly vary on height and width depending on who originally built the conversion.

## 4. Load and unload the car

You and your carer should practise getting in and out of the car as it should be user-friendly and easy to use, particularly if you have chosen the right conversion like a lowered-floor conversion, with a wheelchair lift or swivel seat. This will also help identify if you need any extra features such as a winch. A winch helps by moving the wheelchair passenger up the ramp and into position and it is assisted by an electric motor which pulls the wheelchair up. It is operated by a remote control.

## 5. Think of the future

Consider whether your needs might change in the near future. For example, if you will need a bigger wheelchair during the next five years this may impact on the amount of space you need or the size of the vehicle you need. If you have a deteriorating health condition, consider whether there are additional options you could need added later and check to see if the vehicle is suitable for those additional options.



## 6. Luggage space

Consider the amount of equipment that you need to take with you on your journeys. Whether it is suitcases, medical equipment or groceries it must all go somewhere so choose carefully but also take into consideration how often you might carry this luggage. This will impact the decision on the size of vehicle or type of conversion that will suit your needs.

## 7. Cost

Consider the budget you have to spend without putting yourself under financial strain. A good mobility company will have numerous options for you to choose from to suit all budgets. Ask what financial supports are available. Look at the cost of buying a car and if it would suit your expenditure but don't get talked into repayments that you are unable to support. Consider what maintenance has been done on the vehicle or if there is any due shortly that could be a future expense.

## 8. Warranty & peace of mind

Always insist on getting a comprehensive warranty with your car to cover you for future unexpected repair costs. Any reputable company will have the vehicle in excellent condition and supplied with a new NCT test so it shouldn't be a problem supplying a good warranty with the vehicle if the dealer has confidence in what they are supplying. Always ask what the warranty covers and for what term?

## 9. VAT & VRT Remission / Primary Medical Cert

This can be a mine field of information especially if it's your first time with the scheme so it is advised to contact a mobility adviser in the very early stages as this can save you a lot of time and unnecessary stress. A good mobility adviser will also assist you with the application, Revenue online account setup and follow-on steps until the process is finished.

## 10. Types of vehicles available

- Small cars - usually maximum of 3 passengers plus wheelchair occupant. Usually fitted with a lowered floor. Example: Citroen Berlingo or Volkswagen Caddy size.
- Medium cars - usually up to 5 passengers plus wheelchair occupant. Can be fitted with a lowered floor or wheelchair lift. Example: Peugeot Expert size
- Large cars - can carry up to 8 passengers or multiple wheelchairs but restricted with barrier or underground car parks. Usually fitted with a wheelchair lift. Example: Renault Master size.

## About Donal Murtagh Mobility Ltd

It is our goal at Donal Murtagh Mobility Ltd to address any questions or apprehensions you may experience with the utmost compassion, understanding and honesty. Our mobility consultants strive to make your purchase as easy and comfortable as possible. We know it is not always possible for our customers to get to us so we offer a **Free Nationwide No Obligation Home Demonstration Service**. We will give you honest and experienced advice on the best possible vehicle and conversion that matches the situation and disability, budget and wishes of every potential customer and we will take care of all the confusing paper work and online process on your behalf from start to finish. For more information contact Donal Murtagh Mobility on 0906481050 or email [donal@dmmobility.ie](mailto:donal@dmmobility.ie)





## GLENN GRAY DAY IN THE LIFE

### Glenn Gray talks about his role as the Peer Support Co-ordinator for Spinal Injuries Ireland

#### How many days do you work at SII?

I currently work three days a week, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

#### What is your job title?

I have a number of areas which I am responsible for but my main role is Peer Support Co-ordinator.

#### How did you get involved with this role?

I first got involved with the peer support role when I applied for a job opening that I saw advertised for Spinal Injuries Ireland. At the time I was living in France but I returned home for an interview, got the job, and moved back to Ireland to take up the role.

#### What does your role involve?

As the Peer Support Co-ordinator, there is a number of aspects to the

role. Firstly, I am the first point of contact from Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) for patients admitted into the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH). I meet with each patient individually, explain the services we have on offer, chat to them about any concerns they might have regarding their recovery, discuss their goals and encourage them to engage with the peer support service we have on offer.

Every Monday night, I also run the peer support meetings in the lecture room at the NRH from 7pm to 8pm. This gives patients an opportunity to meet with mentors who have been living with a spinal cord injury for some time and provides them with someone they can link in with on an ongoing basis for support.

Lastly, I also organise peer support for patients after they are discharged from the NRH. When patients return

home, I link them in with someone living in their county or area with the same level of injury as them. Being able to link up with a peer support mentor can be very beneficial when adjusting to life post-injury as it's important to know that there is someone close by that can provide support and advice when needed.

Peer support, in my eyes, is extremely important for patients to access. I have seen patients get great inspiration from peer mentors and to be able to speak to someone who truly understands what you are going through is of enormous benefit.

I myself, would have availed of peer support had it been available when I was a patient in the NRH 20 years ago.

#### Any other aspects to your role?

Yes, during the winter months, I organise weekly trips to the cinema on a Tuesday night with patients who are currently in the NRH. We provide a mini bus that takes patients to and from the cinema and we cover the cost of the cinema tickets and refreshments.

During the summer months we bring patients from the NRH out on our powerboat in Dublin Bay with their family members and friends. We also stop off for fish & chips on the way home!

Also, I run the airsoft target shooting once a week in the NRH sports hall. This is available to any patients in the NRH or anyone living locally who would like to come along and try it out. We have always had a great response to the airsoft target shooting and it always makes for a fun evening.

#### Contact

**If you would like to get involved with the peer support service or if you have any questions you can contact Glenn Gray on (01) 6532180/0872323205 or email [glenn@spinalinjuries.ie](mailto:glenn@spinalinjuries.ie)**





## SII PEER MENTORING IN CORK

### Why not head along to one of our peer mentor support meetings this winter?

Peer mentoring is a form of supportive relationship that usually takes place between a person who has lived through a specific experience (peer mentor) and other persons who have similar experiences (peer mentees).

In 2015, Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) implemented a Peer Support programme for patients in the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH).

From this successful initiative, a number of participants with spinal cord Injury were trained as peer mentors and the first pilot is now being offered in the Cork area.

My name is Brendan Glynn and I was one of the five volunteers that attended a day-long training session in Cork city in early 2016. This training day was very informative and I think it instilled enough belief in

each of us to take on the challenge of becoming a peer mentor.

We were very much made aware of our responsibilities, but we were also reassured that each of us had the one key ingredient – we had a spinal injury of some type or other ourselves. We would therefore share that bond with whoever we met in the new group we were about to set up.

Once each of us had an idea of what peer mentoring involved, SII supported us in setting up a Peer Mentoring Support group in our own area of the county. It was decided to base one of the groups in North Cork, in Mallow.

The Hibernian Hotel in Mallow very generously agreed to give us a free meeting room once a month, for an hour on a Saturday morning from 12pm to 1pm. Contact was then made with all those living with a spinal cord injury in the region.

Since we started in October 2016, we have met nine times. Over the course of these meetings, nine different members have attended. We have an average attendance of five. Our conditions are varied, from walkers to wheelchair users, with similar and varied medical and physical challenges. Our discussions are as varied as each of us, but the main reasons given by our members for attending these sessions are:

- They have sustained a SCI in the last 18 months and are looking for advice on adjusting to life in general.
- They are looking for advice and guidance on how to try something new such as a new job, a particular task like driving, a new activity or hobby.
- They have a specific medical condition which has caused their SCI and would like to speak to someone who is living with the same condition.
- They just want to talk with someone and share similar experiences as themselves.
- They are experiencing the challenges of growing old with a SCI and would like to speak to others in a similar situation.

None of us have medical expertise or professional backgrounds in counselling. What we do have is years of personal experience and wisdom of what it is like to go through the life changing ordeal of a spinal injury. Maybe this gives us an understanding of the challenges being faced by our peers that no medical expert can ever understand. Maybe this also is why it can be of great benefit for us to meet up on occasion and share the good and the bad experiences together. There's strength in numbers!

The Peer Mentor Support group in Mallow, and all around the country, would love to have new members. The groups will not function without members attending.

**If you are interested in joining the Mallow group you can email [brennlynn@eircom.net](mailto:brennlynn@eircom.net) or call him on 086 3629199. If you would like to join a group elsewhere in the country please Glenn from SII on 01 653 2180 or email [glenn@spinalinjuries.ie](mailto:glenn@spinalinjuries.ie)**





## RETURNING TO THE GYM WITH A SCI

Photography by Agnieszka Osińska - Cassidy

### John O'Brien, who has a C4/C5 SCI, has turned his life around by joining his local gym

On Tuesday 21st August 2012, John O'Brien's life changed forever when the car he was driving collided with loose cattle on the Navan to Kells Road.

John (27), who is from Nobber, Co. Meath sustained a C4/C5 spinal cord injury which left him with limited mobility in both his arms and legs.

John explained that he spent 10 months in total in hospital between the Mater Hospital in Dublin and also the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire.

"It was a very tough time and a lot of emphasis was put on recovery through occupational therapy and physiotherapy," said John.

"At that time in hospital my physio consisted of going down to the gym and lying down on a tilt table to get my upper limbs and lower limbs stretched out in order to try and loosen them out. In particular, the muscles in my arms were very tight. I wasn't really able to do anything much for myself.

"I remember seeing a lot of other patients going down to the proper gym to use the

bikes and lift weights, but I was nowhere near that level. I was never asked, nor did anybody ever suggest to me to go down to the gym. I knew myself, my body just wasn't able for it."

John explained that accepting his 'new normal' was difficult but he realised that he had to look to the future in order to progress.

"Obviously my life has not turned the way I would have liked it to but I have no choice but to make the most of it and try to be the best that I can be. As a wheelchair user, however, and as I have a C4/C5 spinal cord injury, there are certain limits to what I can do physically."

John recently decided to set himself some goals to try and regain some mobility and get fit again by going to his local gym.

"It's five years since I sustained my injury and I now find myself in my local gym 'Gym An Ri' in Kingscourt, Co. Cavan with a personalised gym program to suit my needs. I probably didn't think this was ever going to happen.

"I started going to the gym back in January this year. It is one of the best decisions I have ever made. I remember thinking about it at Christmas time wondering would I be able for it? I was quite nervous at first but then I just thought why not give it a go, what's the worst that can happen? So I went in and had a chat with the gym instructors. They asked me about my goals/what I wanted to get out of the gym and my exercise/physio regime and we went from there.

"After the first session I came home thinking it was really good and I thought I would give it a proper go. Seven months later I am still going to the gym twice a week on a Monday and Thursday, along with four physiotherapy sessions, three FES bike sessions and one swimming pool session a week. The FES bike sessions consist of working my arms, legs and abdominal muscles through electrical stimulation."

John explained that going to the gym each week has really helped him to improve his muscle memory and his physical strength.



Photography by Agnieszka Osińska - Cassidy

**“ It is not just about going to the gym, lifting weights and having that only focus, it's the social aspect that I find really good too ”**

“I am on an upper body weights programme where the focus is on improving, toning and building up strength in various muscle groups such as biceps, triceps, shoulders, wrists, chest and back. My weights started off light in January because it was all about building up my technique, but I have been progressing quite well over the last number of months.”

John credits his gym instructors for giving him the confidence to progress in the gym.

“My two gym instructors Sharon and Amanda are brilliant. They are always thinking of new ideas and new stretches and exercises that can help me improve in any way. My weights programme is varied each week which keeps everything interesting and it is something that I really enjoy. I haven't got around to using the treadmill yet; I keep asking Sharon and Amanda but for some reason they won't let me?! I just can't figure it out!”

John explained that being a member of the gym has not only helped him physically but mentally too.

“It is not just about going to the gym, lifting weights and having that only focus, it's the social aspect that I find really good too. I'm going in, I'm getting out of the house and I'm seeing different faces and chatting to people. As a big GAA fan myself, there is always a bit of banter and slagging going on regarding football matches that may have been on over the weekend involving Meath and Cavan as the gym is located in Kingscourt on the Meath/Cavan border.

“The main thing is that I enjoy it and that I am getting something good out of going to the gym. I never come home after a gym session thinking negatively about it. I suppose it helps put me in good form and it makes me feel like I have done something positive. It also gives me a sense of achievement.”

As part of his gym programme, John makes sure to track his gains by getting his instructors to measure him every few weeks.



Photography by Agnieszka Osińska - Cassidy

“I get measurements taken every four – six weeks where my chest, stomach, arms and shoulders are all measured to see if I am on the right track. Thankfully, everything is going well so far so hopefully I can keep this up.

“Sharon and Amanda also give me nutritional advice, which is very helpful. As a wheelchair user it is very important to watch what you eat and to be eating the correct food. I have learned a lot from going to the gym, from thinking more positively about my nutrition and diet, to physically becoming stronger and to mentally feeling better. It has also helped with my confidence. The social aspect of getting out of the house to go and do something productive and the fact that I can have a chat with people and have the craic is brilliant. I find it is important to have fun and to enjoy what you're doing. It is so important to have the correct mix of maintaining a focus on improving yourself but also enjoying yourself at the same time.”

In terms of getting to and from the gym each week, John always enlists the help of one of his personal assistants (PAs). “A PA will always come with me and they all know that the gym is something that I look forward to every Monday and Thursday.”

John said he is now looking to the future and is excited about where he can go next in terms of fitness.

“Next on my list is to go over to Prime Physio in Cambridge, England. The plan is to go over in September of this year for three days intensive physio to try and improve my upper body strength in whatever way I can. The Prime Physio Specialist Therapy Centre is a physiotherapy led rehabilitation centre that deals with people who have suffered spinal cord injuries.”

He added: “There is a lot in the news regarding mental health, and one way of certainly helping with that, I find, is by exercising. I suppose if there is anybody who is considering going to the gym or joining a sports team or just going out for a walk/jog in the evening but hasn't made that step yet for whatever reason, why not give it a go? If I can do it I'm sure you can do it.”



Photography by Agnieszka Osińska - Cassidy





## PARATRIATHLON TRAINING

### Have you ever thought about signing up?

Triathlon Ireland set up a high-performance Paratriathlon Programme two years ago to cater to athletes with disabilities who wanted to compete at a high level.

The programme has proved very successful over the last two years and even culminated in two athletes gaining a slot at the Rio Paralympics in 2016.

The athletes, Catherine Walsh and her guide Fran Meehan, competed at the

inaugural paratriathlon event at Rio and secured a very credible 8th place. The paratriathlon team is currently recruiting new members to join their team with a view to competing at the next Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020.

Eamonn Tilley, Paratriathlon Technical Director, explained that anyone with a spinal cord injury is welcome to come along for an assessment to discuss whether they would like to sign up to be a paratriathlon athlete.

“Paratriathlon is only in its infancy stages especially for Irish athletes so it is an exciting time. We have only participated at this level over the past 14-18 months and in addition, Rio was the first Paralympic Games to have had para-triathletes competing.”

Eamonn explained that as paratriathlon events are now starting to develop at a more rapid pace, both nationally and internationally, there are a number of categories that spinal cord injury athletes fall under, depending on the level of their injury.

“The best thing to do is to contact me and we can then arrange for the athlete to come along for an assessment. We can then classify the category the athlete would fall into and begin training if the person is interested in going forward with it.

We offer training in Dublin and Antrim in athletics track and swimming pool. We offer supervised free coaching sessions and it is open to all athletes no matter what their level of ability.”

**If you are interested in talking to Triathlon Ireland about becoming a paratriathlon athlete contact Eamonn Tilley on 0834381654 or email him on [eamonn@triathlonireland.com](mailto:eamonn@triathlonireland.com)**





### How to tackle your chronic pain to allow you to self-manage it

There are often particular activities that are challenging, painful and sometimes avoided for fear of causing damage, pain or harm. With new knowledge of pain and confidence to move we can gradually re-engage with these activities.

By self-managing your pain, the focus is not on your body, it is on you instead.

Pacing comes under the umbrella of self-management. As the name suggests, self-management is about the person and the ways they can adapt their situation in order to live a more fulfilled life despite their pain. However, it is important to stress that self-management is not a replacement for medication though many people find that they can reduce their medication.

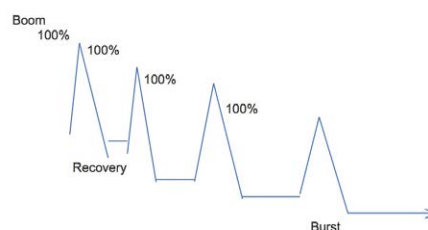
**Graded exposure and pacing** can be a useful technique for persons living with chronic pain or immobility. Pacing means that we set a baseline and work towards our goals. Graded exposure is a method of finding movement that is pain-free and building on that. The idea is to break the brain's association between a particular movement and the fear that it will result in the onset of pain.

Let me give you an example of how this can work. If you are experiencing pain when you sit upright, at about a 45° angle; utilizing graded exposure, you would start by finding a *very* easy range of movement. Perhaps you would start by raising your upper body only 5° off the bed. When lying down, bring your attention on to your body, make sure that you feel relaxed, and slowly bend at the hips to about 5°. Even if you are comfortable in this position you only stay for 20 minutes and then return to your starting position. Start to notice how you feel, and acknowledge to yourself that you can do this successfully. Don't be afraid to set your limits very small to start. This is the opposite of pushing yourself to the limit because this can result in **the 'Boom burst' cycle**.

By doing less, more often your body learns to tolerate what you are doing.

Each week, bend just a *little* further. If you reach a point where you begin to feel tension or pain, then you return to where you can still move without pain or tension for a day or two. The idea is to find a *successful* position and keep building on it. The idea is that you are essentially trying to trick your brain by breaking its association between a particular movement and pain.

#### The 'Boom/Burst cycle'



When you look at this graph, you can see that your 100% effort decreases and your rest or recovery time increases each time you **'boom'** i.e. each time you overdo it. Ultimately this results in the **'burst'**, when you can do very little or nothing because your 'flare ups' are so severe.

Graded exposure can be adapted to almost any movement. You can design it to fit your own specific needs. In extreme cases where even slight movement is painful, just a *hint* of movement or *mentally visualizing* successful movement can be the starting position.

**Vidyamala Burch**, international author of 'Living well with pain and illness', has lived with chronic pain and partial paraplegia for over 30 years due to a spinal injury. She is quoted as saying the following: "Take a break before you break."

Check out her you tube video on managing pain here:

<https://youtu.be/XgpV2xYFp-8>

Pain is a huge emotional experience as well as a physical sensation. You

may think that your pain has a life of its own, however this is not the case. There are many thoughts that increase our pain experience, for example, anger, frustration, guilt, despair, anxiety, and hopelessness.

The Tony Robbins quote, **"Where the focus goes, energy flows"** is useful in trying to understand your pain.

Where is your attention focused? Where your attention goes has a lot to do with your pain.

This is the reason I recommend that you keep a 'Pain free diary'. By doing this you are training your brain to expect less pain. Consistency is the key and this doesn't mean that you won't have bad days, but it's about searching for the 'glimmer of sunlight' on those 'darker' days.

As a **pain management coach**, my work with you is about your mind, body, thoughts, and other people in your life.

Self-management is about getting yourself back into the driving seat of your own life. It may be necessary for you to change the way you do things to take account of your limitations but the most important thing is to believe in yourself and capture the good things about yourself once again.

**Eileen Hopkins, RGN, RCN, Coach, Trainer and Motivational Speaker, is a Pain Management Coach and a Registered General & Sick Children's Nurse. She holds a Diploma in Personal & Business Coaching and QQI Level 6 Award in Life & Workplace Coaching. For more information about Eileen see [www.saolcoaching.com](http://www.saolcoaching.com)**





## COLOUR ME FRIDAY 2017

SII would like to thank everyone that took part in our annual Colour Me Friday campaign on Friday October 6th 2017. It was a massive success this year and we are looking forward to next year already!







## CORK JAZZ BALL 2017

The inaugural Cork Jazz Ball, which took place on Saturday 29th October, was a great night with over €15,000 raised in aid of SII. Thank you to everyone who came along on the night and also huge thanks to John Twomey and his committee of friends for organising it..



## Q BALL 2017

The annual Q Ball took place on 30th September at the Ballsbridge Hotel in Dublin. Over €50,000 was raised on the night which will go towards people and families living with spinal cord injuries. SII would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who attended and supported us on the night.





**Spreading tidings  
of hope and joy among  
your family and friends  
at Christmastime**

*Go back to page 15*



Aisling, Communications Officer  
Spinal Injuries Ireland

**Dear readers**

**Hope** is the real message of Christmastime.

And my hope is that before you put down this magazine you'll go back to page 15 and encourage as many of your friends and family to read it and offer their support to our work with a monthly donation in the **NEW YEAR!**

Christmas is always a very special time of the year for reaching out to others with the hand of friendship and hope...

**... please give us a hand on page 15 this Christmas**



*Spinal Injuries Ireland rely on donations  
from friends and supporters for a huge  
61% of our funding*



## SII REGIONAL MEETINGS DATES – DECEMBER 2017 – MARCH 2018

### December (Xmas)

Friday 1st	tbc	Portlaoise	The Parish Centre
Monday 4th	tbc	Dublin, Tallaght	The Maldron Hotel
Tuesday 5th	tbc	Galway	The Westwood Hotel
Tuesday 5th	tbc	Dundalk	The Crowne Plaza
Thursday 7th	7-9 pm	Limerick	Maldron Hotel, Roxboro
Tuesday 12th	tbc	Mayo	tbc
Wednesday 13th	2-4 pm	Cork	Nemo Rangers
Thursday 14th	tbc	Wexford	The Maldron Hotel
Friday 15th	tbc	Waterford	The Viking Hotel
Friday 15th	tbc	Carrick on Shannon IWA	

### March

Monday 5th	2-4 pm	Letterkenny	IWA
Tuesday 6th	tbc	Dublin, Tallaght	The Maldron Hotel
Tuesday 6th	2-4 pm	Killarney	tbc
Thursday 8th	2-4	Limerick	IWA Roxboro
Thursday 8th	tbc	Dundalk	The Crowne Plaza
Tuesday 13th	7-9 pm	Galway	The Westwood Hotel
Wednesday 14th	2-4 pm	Cork	Nemo Rangers
Thursday 15th	tbc	Wexford	The Maldron
Friday 16th	tbc	Waterford	The Viking Hotel
Tuesday 20th	6.30-8pm	Castlebar	tbc
tbc	tbc	Portlaoise	tbc

t

*Merry Christmas*

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# Volunteering Opportunities

**We work with hundreds of volunteers every year who get involved for numerous reasons from developing new skills to meeting new people and having fun. All of our volunteers are committed to making a difference to lives of people living with a spinal cord injury in Ireland. Below are just some examples of how you can get involved with our work:**

## Peer Volunteering

If you have a Spinal Cord Injury and you are three years post injury you can volunteer for our 'Someone Like Me' programme. SII's peer volunteers are people with spinal cord injury of all ages and injury levels who volunteer their time to link in with patients in the hospital in group or individual sessions, as well as with members in the community who are recently discharged home or are in specific need of support and information. Full training and ongoing support for peer volunteers is provided.

## Activities & Outings

We run a social activities programme at the NRH campus that provides an opportunity for newly injured patients to realise and rediscover personal potential and achievement. These activities include adaptive kayaking, powerboating, airsoft and offers social outings and trips such as cinema visits, sports matches and shopping trips. We need volunteer minibus drivers, cinema and shopping companions, and sports volunteers to help us run these activities.

## Office opportunities

Put your skills to good use or learn new ones whilst volunteering in our Resource Centre.

## Campaign for Change

Take action and help to support better lives for people living with a spinal cord injury and their families by taking part in one of our campaigning activities. Simple tasks from contacting your local TD or newspaper can make a big difference in raising awareness and creating change. Contact us on how you can make a difference.

## Colour Me Friday

Our national flag day takes place every October where workplaces, schools and event organisers across Ireland 'go green' to raise funds and awareness for people with a spinal cord injury. We are always looking for volunteers to get involved in any way that they can from hosting your event to helping out with a collection in your local supermarket.

## Fundraising Activities

We are always looking for volunteers to take part in one of our fundraising events throughout the year. You can raise funds by taking part in one of our campaigns or through a challenge event such as a marathon, mini marathon, cycle or extreme events. You can also join one of our existing event committees or try and organise your own event, such as a coffee morning, a golf classic, a parachute jump – the options are endless.

**If you'd like more information on any of these opportunities or you want to find out about other ways to get involved please email us on [info@spinalinjuries.ie](mailto:info@spinalinjuries.ie) or call 01 2355317.**