

DSILMB Christmas Newsletter

Dear Members

As a unique and strange 2020 draws to a close we wish to write to you to let you know what is going on in the Branch and how we have adapted to the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is hard to believe that this time last year we did not know anything about the Corona Virus and how it would affect us.

- **Regional Advisory Council:** RAC is an independent self-advocacy group for adults with Down syndrome in the North East area. The 14-member council, consisting primarily of people from Meath and Louth but also some from Westmeath and Cavan, is the first of its kind within DSILMB's 25 branches. Based on the successful National Advisory Council model, the RAC offers an opportunity for the branch members to have a structured input into the plans and activities of the Louth Meath and other local branches. The RAC has continued to meet online though was initially put on hold due to COVID-19
- **Latch On Adult Literacy & Work Skills Programme:** The Latch On Adult Literacy and Work Skills Programme was put on hold during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. The Programme has now resumed on-line with 13 students taking part.
- **Funding Scheme:** The funding scheme is available again in 2020. The Funding Scheme will cover therapies, and sports / recreational activities that will benefit members with Down syndrome. Application Forms have been emailed to members and more details can be found on our Webpage <https://dsilmb.ie/more/funding-scheme/>. There are some Terms and Conditions that apply.
- **Early Intervention Programme:** The early Intervention Programme was suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions in March but resumed in September with new Protocols, Risk Assessments and Procedures in place. We would like to thank our Early Intervention Programme Subcommittee and especially Andrea, Ann, and Rebecca who put in so much hard work over the summer so that the Programme could resume safely.
- **Tots of Fun Tots:** was cancelled in March and will resume next year if and when it is safe to do so
- **Speech & Drama/Social Skills Club:** The Speech and Drama Club was initially suspended in Drogheda but has now resumed for weekly sessions online. We would like to Thank Audrey Jackson for her fab work in keeping the Club going as well as Zoe Finegan O'Toole our Drama teacher. The Club in Navan has been suspended but we hope to have it back in the New Year.
- **Saturday Club:** The Saturday club was also put on hold due to the current restrictions in March but hopefully will resume in the new year when it is safe to do so
- **Social Events:** We held a successful Valentine's disco in February but then our other plans were put on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions in March. We had a virtual Christmas party on Sunday 13th of December. A big Thank you to Liz Murray for organizing all our Disco's etc. and to Shay Casserley, Linda Farrell for hosting our Virtual Christmas Party and to their assistants on the night Philip Connolly and Stephen Farrell. Instead of a Children's Christmas Party we hosted a well-attended Virtual Magic Show on Sunday 13th December. A big Thank you to Rebecca Smith for organizing the Magic Show.
- **Family Fun Day:** Unfortunately, our annual Family Fun Day had to be cancelled this year due to COVID-19.
- **Sibshops:** We had held 2 Sibshops in January and February before the Sibshops had to be put on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions in March. We had two virtual Sibshops in December which seemed to go very well, and we shall run more Sibshops in the new year
- **Workshops:** We Held a workshop in conjunction with Special Hands Activity Club where we brought May Gannon to talk about Transition to Adulthood on 5th March 2020 in the Ardboyne Hotel Navan 7.30.
- **Branch AGM:** We had our branch AGM in September virtually as we had to cancel the physical AGM in April due to COVID-19. We would like to pay a big thank you to our Branch Committee for volunteering to help run the branch and thank them for all their hard work.

- **Masks & Sanitiser:** The branch distributed free homemade Masks which were supplied by East Coast Mask Makers and distributed Hand Sanitiser which was donated by Listoke distilleries. A big Thank you to East Coast Mask Makers and Listoke distilleries for their kind donation
- **Members volunteering with DSI:** Our Chairman Paul Radford was elected to the Board of DSI as one of the Leinster Reps. Paula McDonagh was elected as the Branch Rep on the National Council. A Big Thank you to Paul and Paula for volunteering.
- **Community Education from the LMETB:** Mike Egan our Regional Resource Officer has organised Community Education Courses for our Adult members. 4 Courses have already taken place in Arts & Crafts and Computers and funding has been granted for 2 more in the New Year.
- **Fun with Numbers:** a fun way of working with numbers through games and creative learning aids was organised in November for 2 Groups. It is a light-hearted way of learning basic number skills like counting, adding, and subtraction, incorporating concepts of division and multiplication. Fun with Numbers presents opportunities for using life skills like following a recipe using measurements and time, along with planning journeys and using money. A big Thank you to Deirdre Myler for providing the Course as well as Rebecca Smith for organising the Course.
- **Down Syndrome Awareness Campaign:** We ran a Down Syndrome awareness campaign during the month of October on our Social Media Channels to celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month. We featured at least one of our members to celebrate our members for being themselves.
- **Speech Practice and Parent & Toddler Groups:** We helped facilitate Speech Practice and Parent & Toddler groups led by Olive Buckeridge online.
- **Regional Resource Officer:** Our Regional Resource Officer, Mike Egan is here to help people with Down syndrome and their family's access support locally. Regional Resource Officers provide vital support and a point of contact for new parents as well as families who need help and support at local level at every life stage. Mike can be contacted at 085 8618866 or mike@downsyndrome.ie
- **Fundraising:** This year has been exceedingly difficult for fundraising for many charities and organisations including ourselves. We had to cancel two of our main funding initiatives for 2020. The Rock your Socks fundraiser which is based around World Down Syndrome Day had to be cancelled at the very last moment. A big Thank you to Yvonne O'Connor who did so much work organising and it is such a pity that all that work was in vain. We hope to reorganize this fundraiser for WDSD 2021.

We also had to cancel the HOEDOWN which was also in conjunction with WDSD. We would like to thank Ellie Cosgrove for organising as well as all the fabulous Artists that were going to perform.

We would also like to thank all who organised fundraisers for the Branch especially around events such as the Mini Marathon, Dublin City Marathon, Birthdays etc. and all those who made donations.

We have a Branch Fundraising page on iDonate which can be used by members to set up events to raise money for the Branch

- **Membership:** The 2021 Branch membership falls due for our members on 1st January 2021. The membership fee for 2021 is €20 for all members. Membership forms can be downloaded from <https://dsilmb.ie/becomeamember/> or can be got from Brendan on secretarydslm@gmail.com.

In conclusion we would like to take this opportunity to thank our Branch Committee who work tirelessly for our Branch and its Members. We would also like to thank all our members and their families for all their support during this particularly challenging year and to wish you all a very Safe, Healthy and Happy Christmas and a very Happy and Safe New Year.