



## **Minutes of the AGM of the National Children's Branch of MGA**

Held at the Moat House Hotel, Stoke on Trent

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2013

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The meeting was opened at 14.15 with a welcome from Gary Collins.

Apologies received from:

Alex Seaborn and Mary Fenner

Tom Smith and Laura Galvin

Mike and Maxine Bailey-Stewart

Geraldine Thompson

Kerry and Gordon Webster

The minutes of the previous AGM were not available

**Chairman's report:** Melissa Jones had nothing to report. Gary Collins and Helen Bedford reported and spoke of success with the newly upgraded Website, and the ongoing success of the Facebook Site. It was also mentioned how members of the Children's Group had attended and contributed the CMS Patients Day organised by the Oxford Team in March.

**Secretary's report:** Helen Bedford reported some very difficult times for some members over the past year. Moving forward we need more help with management. It was also acknowledged that fundraising had once again been a real success. Special note was made of Tom Smith's epic bike ride from Paris to Florence, (which so far has raised over £8,000).

**Treasurer's report:** Garry showed a series of slides giving financial information for the past 3 years. The report for the last year showed £5,360.97 income with £2,692.55 currently in the bank. Derby hold funds raised on behalf of the branch (this includes items such as Children in Need) of £20,979.00.

A vote of thanks was given to Garry for his work as treasurer and also included were all members of the committee. Garry reminded everyone that if they pay funds into the account to please let him know when what for and how much.

A discussion took place relating to the age range of children and young people who could be part of the branch as Lee and some of the other 'older' members did not feel that they wanted to stop attending. A resolution was passed by all those attending that the age range for this group should be increased to 25 years.

Alison Miles brought everyone's attention to the new membership forms which we at MGA ask everyone to complete. It is important that parents become members of the charity as this enables them to attend this annual meeting. The current committee stood down for the elections for the coming year. Nominations received via the forms sent to everyone prior to the meeting were 3 for Stephen Driver as chairman, 3 for Laura Galvin as secretary and 3 for Garry Hall as treasurer. An additional nomination was taken from the floor for Mel Jones as Chairman and voting was Stephen Driver 3 votes Mel Jones 5 votes.

Mel was duly elected for a further year. \*\*\* (see addendum update below)  
The nominations of Laura and Garry were unopposed.  
Karen Hobbs suggested that Stephen Driver should become Vice Chairman and this was agreed.

Other committee members are:

Helen Bedford – roving advisor. With her wealth of knowledge of the branch Helen is available to anyone with a problem.

First Contact: Melissa Jones

Press Officer: Gary Collins

Young People: Lee Thompson

Fundraising: Tracey Cockburn and Michelle Shotton

Sub committee for organising next years meeting:

Nick Bedford, Gary Collins, Ron Walker, Rachel Collins, Rita Goldthorp

Education: Kerry Webster.

Helen suggested that perhaps some parents would like to arrive on the Thursday afternoon to avoid the traffic delays that always happen on Fridays – this idea was well received by several parents but the extra day will be optional.

**AOB** Were there any ideas from the floor, or any complaints – none

Karen Hobbs gave a vote of thanks to the committee for their hard work

It was decided to set up a readers panel for new leaflets etc. and those sitting on this on behalf of the children will be Ian Darlington, Lee Thompson, Alison Miles and Hayden Collins.

The AGM closed at 3pm

**Date of next AGM 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

Notes for the next meeting: We will investigate whether we can obtain reduced price tickets for Alton Towers. More activities are required for the children in all age groups. Karen asked for a session on stress management.

### **Branch Update 3 July 2013-11-18**

After careful consideration, Melissa Jones decided to step down as Chair on the 3rd July 2013.

She will however still retain her role as First Contact Point, and a branch advisor.

Mel, we thank you for the time and effort you have put into the Branch as Chair over the years.

Given this change,

### **Steve Driver was duly appointed Chair for 2013/2014**

The 2013/2014 Branch now consists of the following;

- Chair – Steven Driver
- Secretary – Laura Galvin
- Treasurer – Garry Hall

### **Further appointed roles**

- Education Advisor – Kerry Webster
- Branch Adviser, and 'First Contact' point – Melissa Jones
- Branch Adviser - Helen Bedford
- Press, Media & PR – Gary Collins
- Fundraising – Michelle Shotton
- Fundraising – Tracey Cockburn
- Weekend Planning – Nick Bedford
- Weekend Planning – Gary Collins
- Weekend Planning – Helen Bedford
- Weekend Planning – Rachel Collins
- Young Person's Representative – Lee Thompson

## **APPENDIX**

### **A short history of the children's branch** (for those who are new to us)

About 7 years ago it was noticeable that we were getting enquiries from more and more families who had children with MG (CMS at that stage was not often (if ever) mentioned. Together with John Mason chairman of the West Dorset branch of MGA (and at that time a Trustee) we applied for funding to support these families and managed to get sufficient to be able to hold and meeting a do some training courses and CRB checks. The only problem was that the meeting had to be held in John's area which was Dorset. However, there was enough interest for the meeting to go ahead and we booked a room at the RNLI in Poole, Dr Georgina Burke agreed to be our speaker and we had a very useful meeting. The Websters, Gerry Thompson and Alison Miles all attended this meeting together with some other parents.

Alongside the meetings we did some training courses on benefits concentrating on job seekers allowance and DLA. A young girl called Claire was the 'first contact' for young people and these courses enabled her to help people through their benefits problems. John and myself found the information useful from a different angle – our older members around the Southwest. We went on to do another course on Attendance Allowance and John then visited his local members to help with their applications whilst I held benefits information days helping members complete the forms.

It soon got back to MGA headquarters that the children's branch was a success and that members appreciated the help with benefits. On a dark very wet night I took Alasdair Nimmo to Exeter services to meet one Steve Bradshaw a member of the East Devon branch who worked within the benefits service. Steve offered his help but it would take several years before we were able to actually employ him as our benefits officer.

The meetings of the children's branch were followed by a regular newsletter aimed a young people and then in 2008 along came Helen Bedford and Mel Jones who both had children with CMS. They put their heads together and decided that a residential meeting was the answer to enable more families to meet together for self-support. The first meeting for just 8 families had a budget – which we dare not exceed – of £800 raised by Marjorie Dix MBE and myself. When Alasdair Nimmo visited the group he realised its importance and gave the go-ahead for a National Children's Branch.

The rest as they say is history.

Rita