

Inform!



The Cedar Foundation User Forum Newsletter February 2005

User Forum Conference

Story by Joe Bourke, User Forum Committee

The Cedar Foundation's User Forum re-launched itself at its annual conference held in the Glenavna Hotel, Newtownabbey, recently. Attendees heard about the many changes and improvements that have taken place over the last 12 months that have made the new User Forum bigger and better than before.



The User Forum at Annual Conference

But what exactly is The Cedar Foundation User Forum. It's a dynamic group of people who have physical disabilities and/or brain injury who use the services of The Cedar Foundation. After last year's conference at the Glenavna Hotel new enthusiasm was breathed into The Forum, with new committee members signing up and new ideas being introduced. The User Forum adopted the very appropriate slogan **"Making a Positive Difference"** and that's exactly what they have been doing over the last year.

Niall Irwin, Chair of The User Forum explains more: "As a group we want to help and guide people with physical disability and their families who ask for advice and offer somewhere for people to turn to, to help them answer their questions.

Our vision is to be a User Forum that is realistic and focused about how we can make a positive difference to The Cedar Foundation, It's Users and Members and that's exactly what we have been achieving and will be continuing to achieve".



The New User Forum

If you would like to find out more details about the work of The Cedar Foundation User Forum contact m.ennis@cedar-foundation.org or call: 028 9061 2424. If you would like to find out more about the general work of The Foundation please contact www.cedar-foundation.org e-mail: info@cedar-foundation.org or telephone 028 9066 6188.

Service User Profile

Story by Mary – Lou McCord, User Forum Committee

Hello, my name is Mary-Lou McCord and I am a member of the User Forum Committee. Let me tell you a bit about myself. I was born on 13th April 1982 and due to a lack of oxygen during birth I have Cerebral Palsy. I attended Fleming Fulton School in Belfast. My parents, family and friends have always been very supportive of me.

There has not been a day in my life when they did not believe in me as a person in my own right. We actively discouraged the use of the word “disabled” and I endeavored to achieve my level best at school, in my music and communicating with a large network of friends and family.

Mary – Lou McCord

I communicate by the Bliss system and have managed to attain a fair degree of speech through therapy. The computer, Internet and text messaging have been valuable assets in assisting me to fully communicate with the outside world. I have a fiancée and lead a very busy and fulfilled life.



I am involved with a lot of projects and attend The Cedar Foundation regularly to learn new skills and also to input into The User Forum Committee. I am also on the User Forum Newsletter Committee which writes INFORM. I feel that people like me are valuable members of the community and have much to contribute. I have been told that I make an impact on people’s lives, both able bodied and otherwise. At the moment, Drake Music is the project upon which I am focusing, but there is so much more to be done.



Disability Awareness Training

Story by Niall Irwin, Chairman of the User Forum

Twas in the year 2003 when Robert Wilson took me under his wing and set me off on the road to discover Disability Awareness Training (DAT). My first experience on delivering being a memorable one with a multicultural/speaking group up in the Crumlin Road at Tools for Solidarity. However since then it has got much easier.



Niall Irwin

I now deliver DAT for Headway Belfast & Disability Network Lisburn. Consisting of a wide range of clients from Year 9 pupils at St Marks High School to Lisburn City Council Staff, as well as new staff/volunteers within The CEDAR Foundation and Headway – Belfast. I am really enjoying doing this line of work, as there is nothing I like more than to talk – Anyone who knows me will agree.

Xmas Dinner

Story by Raymond Kirk, User Forum Committee

The User Forum Committee held its Christmas Dinner in the Tullyglass House Hotel, in Ballymena, on the 18th November 2004. On arriving we were shown to the large dining room where the facilities were excellent. Anne and Michelle made everyone feel very welcome and we were all kept on our toes by Niall’s banter. The dinner itself was a carvery and the lay out was excellent. After the dinner everyone received a Christmas present from you know who? We all had plenty to talk about and Michelle kindly took photographs of us all. As this was The User Forum’s first Christmas get together we all look forward to a full and active New Year and hope to do it all again next Christmas.