

Client: MS Ireland Yellow News
Source: The Meath Chronicle
Date: 03/06/2023
Page: 28
Reach: 10373
Value: 2896.2900

KILMESSAN woman Naomi Hunter's world was turned upside down just weeks before her wedding when she was diagnosed with MS, a year after her sister was confirmed to have the same condition. The mum-of-one tells **SALLY HARDING** that her biggest fear was of being unable to have children

'I want to show people that life does go on, you just need to look after yourself'

AN inspirational woman from Kilmessan who was diagnosed with MS (Multiple Sclerosis) six weeks before her wedding says she won't allow the condition to define her.

Naomi Hunter's world was turned upside down after it was confirmed that she had MS, the condition that her sister was diagnosed with just the year before.

The Hunter family is no stranger to MS with Naomi's paternal grandmother passing away from the disease leaving her father who was twelve at the time, an orphan.

MS is a condition central nervous system (CNS) that can affect the brain and spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, arm or leg movement, sensation or balance.

As part of World MS Day next week (30th May) for **MS Ireland** and Novartis Naomi has taken part in a portrait photography campaign which will be on display at Stephens Green Shopping Centre on Tuesday, 30th May.

2023 marks almost 30 years since people living with MS in Ireland were first offered access to potentially life-changing disease-modifying treatments and during this time, thousands of people's lives have been impacted by the developments in treatments, therapies and groundbreaking research and development that have changed the face of MS.

"My dad's mother passed away from MS in 1966, he was left an orphan, he was only twelve when she died and his dad passed away the year before," explains Naomi.

"My sister was diagnosed with MS in 2010 we were all shocked with what happened to my grandmother. I was diagnosed about 8 weeks before we got married and I was like I

“When people hear 'MS' they think wheelchair, they think disability, I'm a mother to an autistic six-year-old boy, I work full time, I've walked the Camino, I've taken part in a white collar boxing match



Naomi was diagnosed with MS just eight weeks before her wedding.

don't have time for this, I'm getting married, I have a wedding to organise!

"It was kind of a blessing in disguise, everyone was focused on the wedding."
"Over all I've been pretty healthy, I had once relapse in 2013 when my husband was working abroad in Australia, was under severe stress, other than that have never really had any serious issues regarding MS.

Civil servant Naomi says getting the diagnosis was both a relief and a shock. She added; "Around four years before I was diagnosed on and off I had issues with my left eye where my vision was blurry or would completely go and then come back.

"Because my sister was diagnosed the year before, I said right I need to get to the bottom of this and because had been diagnosed so close to me, I was diagnosed within about three weeks."

The Kilmessan woman says the biggest concern for her

when she was diagnosed was the fear of being unable to have children.

"Prof Tubridy who was my neurologist at the time was like no problem, be the pregnant woman with MS don't the MS patient who is pregnant," she recalls.

"It took us a long time to get pregnant, I was 35 when I had Evan and we always wanted to have two kids, but we decided that in order to be the best mammy I could be to Evan that we would just stay with having one child. That did have an impact but also Evan being diagnosed with Autism did influence that decision too."

Naomi says that she had a reprieve from symptoms during her pregnancy but was diagnosed with chronic fatigue after Evan was born.

"My mam used to be find asleep sitting up in the bed

with Evan in my arms when he was a baby," she said. "That is the only thing that really affects me on a daily basis."

The mum of one is keen to lead by example not only to her son but to other MS sufferers navigating life with the condition.

"Evan is a performer, he loves being centre stage, he loves being surrounded by girls, he is the only boy in the choir and he absolutely loves it! He is a Happy go lucky little boy. "He has had a very serious

diagnosis too and he doesn't understand yet but I want to show him that you can have a completely normal life in spite of any condition you might have.

"When people hear the word MS they think wheelchair they think disability, I'm a mother to an autistic 6 year old boy who is high functioning but is hard work sometimes. I work full time, I've walked the Camino, I've taken part in a white collar boxing match.

"There is nothing that having MS has stopped me doing, I

want to show people that life does go on, you just need to look after yourself and your mindset."

Caitriona Walsh, Novartis Ireland Country President said: "World MS Day 2023 is particularly significant as it marks almost thirty years of scientific developments and progress in the field of MS in Ireland. Over the past three decades thousands of people's lives have been impacted by the developments in treatments, therapies and groundbreaking research and development that have changed the face of MS. At Novartis we are dedicated to harnessing the power of scientific research and development to ensure that the progress continues for many years to come and that we continue to support people living with MS in Ireland and worldwide."



Naomi will take part in a portrait photography campaign for MS Ireland which will be on display at Stephens Green Shopping Centre from today, Tuesday, 30th May. Here she is pictured with son Evan (6).

