

DAI Newsletter

Spring 2009

Yes,
I can!



Dyslexia Association of Ireland

Suffolk Chambers

1 Suffolk Street

Dublin 2

Tel. 01 6790276

Website: www.dyslexia.ie

Charity No. 10044

Registered Company No. 185795

Supporting Children and Adults Living with Dyslexia

2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM

Living with Dyslexia: Help for Parents and Teachers; Self-Help for Adults

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Date: Saturday 25th April 2009.

Venue: Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

AGM = 10.00am to 11.15am.

Conference = 11.30am to 5.00pm.



The 2009 Annual Conference and AGM of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) will take place on Saturday 25th April 2009. We are returning to our usual venue in Maynooth as it is very accessible for people coming from all over the country.

Our AGM will be the first event of the day, and it is open to all current members of DAI. Admission to the AGM only is free. At the AGM, members will hear about what has been happening in the association for the past year, as well as electing a new National Executive Committee.

The 2009 Annual Conference will begin at 11.30am. We hope to have the conference opened by Mr. John Moloney, TD, Junior Minister for Equality, Disability and Mental Health (to be confirmed). Junior Minister Moloney will also launch new DAI information resources for adults which DAI is developing: (1) a basic information leaflet on dyslexia for adults, and (2) a more comprehensive booklet for adults and employers. These up-to-date information resources are needed to increase the awareness and knowledge of dyslexia in adults. DAI is indebted to Anne Hughes for all her voluntary work in producing these resources.

This year, our Annual Conference will include two strands of talks – one for parents and teachers, and separate talks for adults who have been diagnosed with dyslexia.

2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM

Living with Dyslexia: Help for Parents and Teachers; Self-Help for Adults

Talks for Parents and Teachers

The keynote speaker for our conference is



Philomena Ott, an internationally recognised expert on teaching pupils with specific learning difficulties. She is currently an independent educational consultant, trainer and speaker on dyslexia. She is also the author of many books including “How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia” and “How to

Manage Spelling Successfully”. Philomena will deliver two talks at the conference. Her first talk will cover “What works when teaching spelling and writing skills for those living with dyslexia”. The second session will be “Hints and Suggestions for Managing Dyslexia in Adolescent Years”.

The often overlooked area of dyslexia and maths will be addressed by Máirín Barry, an Educational Specialist from UCD. Her talk “Supporting Students with Maths Difficulties” will be very relevant to both teachers and parents and will offer practical strategies for addressing common problem areas in maths.

Ann Jackson, from the CRC, will speak about “Assistive Technology” and how it can be used to assist the learning of students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. She will also provide practical advice on choosing the right technology and software for each individual. An Open Forum will be held at the end of the conference where people will have an opportunity to ask questions.

Talks for Adults with Dyslexia

In an effort to address the needs of adults with dyslexia, this year we will include a strand of talks specifically for adults who have been diagnosed with dyslexia.

Anne Hughes, will speak about the options after assessment for adults – understanding the diagnosis and your next steps. Anne will also talk about the importance of self esteem and looking after yourself.

Sheila Kavanagh and Margaret Doyle, specialists on dyslexia and adults, will offer self-help strategies for working on literacy skills and developing learning strategies. They will also offer adults an introduction to assistive technology programmes which other adults find helpful.

As usual there will be displays from specialist suppliers (books and software), as well as DAI books for sale, e.g. “Dyslexia: An Irish Perspective”, “Lost for Words: Dyslexia at Second Level and Beyond” and the new adult information resources.

Booking Information

In an effort to make this conference accessible to as many people as possible, and bearing in mind the current economic climate, DAI is keeping the conference costs to a minimum. Admission to the Annual Conference is just €40 for DAI members and €60 for non-members. Reduced rates are available for people on social welfare and families on very low income. Please contact the DAI office at 01 6790276 if you need to apply for a reduced rate.

Tea and coffee will be provided in the morning, but lunch is not included in the price. The Glenroyal Hotel offers a variety of lunchtime options from soup and a sandwich to a full meal. There are also many cafes and pubs in Maynooth which is only a five minute drive away.

Pre-booking is essential as there are limited places available at the conference. Detailed programmes and a booking form are enclosed with this newsletter.

AHEAD Survey

AHEAD commissioned research into public perceptions and attitudes towards those with a disability, more specifically dyslexia. Over 1000 adults were interviewed for this research.

Nearly half of people surveyed (47%) did not identify dyslexia as a disability. Director of AHEAD, Ann Heelan said: "One of the biggest challenges for people with dyslexia is getting the people around them to acknowledge and understand that dyslexia is a disability. In the past, people who had trouble reading due to dyslexia were often dismissed as being stupid. That attitude is changing" thankfully. However "bigger classrooms will only make it more difficult for teachers to spot students who may have dyslexia".

The research data shows that attitudes are changing, particularly among younger people. Whereas 60% of those over 55 say they do not know anyone with dyslexia, that figure is only 37% for people in the 15-24 age group. 63% of 15-24 year olds know someone with dyslexia and 9% claimed to have dyslexia themselves.

While younger people have an increased awareness

of dyslexia, the research does reveal a degree of ignorance and uncertainty. 79% agree that dyslexia affects your ability to read and write, however 23% believe that it affects your ability to tell colours apart and 21% think that it affects your ability to drive a car. Almost two in five people (39%) believe that dyslexia can be cured, while one in four (24%) think there is nothing you can do to offset dyslexia. Reassuringly, 57% believe that the problems associated with dyslexia can be resolved.

This research shows that we are moving in the right direction – awareness and understanding of dyslexia is increasing, particularly among younger age groups, but we must still continue to campaign and increase public awareness and knowledge.

AHEAD, the Association of Higher Education Access and Disability works to promote full access and participation in third level education for students with disabilities and to assist in their employment on graduation. AHEAD provides information to students and graduates with disabilities, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents on disability issues in education. For further information visit www.ahead.ie or contact 01 7164396.

Local and European Elections

The upcoming local and European elections which will be held on June 5th provide an opportunity for all of us to campaign for better services for people with dyslexia. When candidates come to your door, seeking your vote, please take the opportunity to tell them about your experience of how the Irish government is dealing with or in many cases not dealing with dyslexia adequately.

Issues which could be raised include:

- Smaller class sizes.
- Greater allocation of special education needs hours to schools.
- More in-service training for all teachers on dyslexia.
- Tax relief for parents for workshop fees.
- Greater provision for adults with dyslexia.
- Increased funding for the Dyslexia Association.

Your own personal story about what help your child is or is not receiving often gives the most powerful message to politicians. State plainly and simply what your own situation is and how your child is being cared for within the school system. State what you feel your child needs and what s/he actually gets. Ask that the needs of your child be met, and that help should be determined by the child's individual needs, not by how many other children also have special educational needs.

How Often Do You Need to Get an Assessment Done

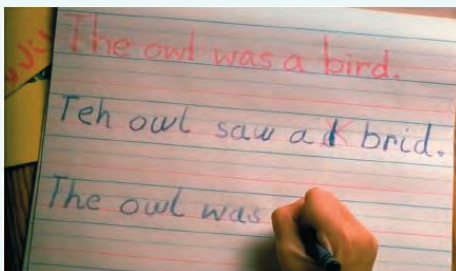
Psycho-educational assessment is an essential tool to diagnose the learning needs of a child. It is not about labelling an individual, but properly identifying the current profile of strengths and weaknesses the child displays, and making recommendations for how best to address learning needs. Assessment provides evidence as to the need for particular supports which may have to be sought from an education provider.

There are only two assessments which are absolutely essential:

1. The first diagnostic assessment, which can be done anytime from the age of six and a half and upwards.
2. A full re-assessment is essential prior to Leaving Certificate, as it is needed to apply for reasonable accommodations in the Leaving Certificate exams, as well as for CAO application and to access supports in third level education. This assessment needs to be done before May of 5th year.

Application for certain supports can only be made with an assessment report that is reasonably up-to-date (usually no more than two years old) e.g.:

- Application for Irish exemption.
- Application to a S.E.N.O. for resource teaching or additional resources.
- Application for a place in a special reading school or unit.



When transferring from primary to secondary school a full up-to-date assessment is not obligatory. However, depending on how old the initial diagnostic assessment is, some second level schools may request an up-to-date report. It is best to check with the second level school as early as possible to ascertain their requirements. Sometimes a review or update of literacy attainments will suffice as evidence of the current level of need.

It is important not to subject a child to too many assessments. It is recommended that a gap of at least two years be left between assessments. This does not mean that children should be assessed every two years; that is unnecessary. Children can also develop test fatigue if they are over-assessed, and the results of the tests become questionable if a child has become too familiar with the tests. The other consideration is cost. Full assessment is costly, both time-wise and financially.

While full psycho-educational assessment doesn't need to be done very often, it is important to monitor a child's progress. This can be done by a Special Educational Needs teacher in school.

Alternatively, a review assessment to monitor attainments can be done by an independent or DAI psychologist. This is a cheaper and shorter assessment which looks to ascertain how the child is progressing.

DAI offers both full psycho-educational assessments and educational review assessments at our office in Dublin. We have worked hard to reduce our waiting lists for both types of assessment and can now offer appointments for children within 3-4 months, occasionally even sooner when cancellations arise. Our waiting list for adult assessment is somewhat longer.

The fee with DAI for a full psycho-educational assessment is €400 (or €370 to current members). The fee for an educational review is €200. DAI also makes reduced rates available to families who are on social welfare or low income families – please ask if you need assistance with the cost, as we try to help whenever possible.

Letter From Successful Past-Pupil

We would like to share with you a letter we received from Laura Byrne, a past pupil of our Dublin Northside workshop.

“Hi ... My name is Laura. I attended the Saturday morning workshop in the little school off Gardiner Street when I was in Primary School. I have a learning disability, dyslexia.

When I was young I was laughed at by the children in my class and made to feel inferior because of my poor spelling and inability to take down details from the blackboard and to follow the lesson at the same time.

I never thought that I would be in a position to get awards and also to have a Degree in anything. But with all the help I received from the teachers in the Dyslexia Association workshop, and by working twice as hard as other students, I have recently achieved an Honours Degree in Geology at UCD. I also won the Cunningham Award for my project work on the Dingle Peninsula, which I had to complete for my thesis. This is awarded each year to 2 students from amongst all the Colleges in Ireland, so it is a great honour to be awarded it.

I am now working as an Exploration Geologist in an Iron Ore Mine in Northern Australia.

I wanted to let other children and young adults who attend the workshops to know that it is possible to achieve great things, even if you have a learning disability.

Don't let others put you down and make you feel inferior. You can do it even if it means working much harder than your classmates. Keep trying and you can achieve anything and everything you want.

Best wishes to all the teachers in the workshops and thank you all for all your help.”

Congratulations to Laura on her fantastic achievement getting her Honours Degree, and in particular winning the prestigious Cunningham Award. Laura is a fantastic role model for all students with dyslexia, and proof that with the right help, encouragement and effort, you can achieve great success!

EDA CONFERENCE 2010



The European Dyslexia Association (EDA) and the Catholic University College Bruges-Ostend (KHBO), Department of Speech and Language Therapy and Audiology, are pleased to announce that they will host the 3rd All-European Dyslexia Conference in Bruges (Belgium) from April 22nd to 24th 2010. The conference will feature keynote speakers representing the best practice and knowledge regarding dyslexia from across Europe, a series of workshops for practitioners as well as opportunities for people to meet and network. The languages of the conference will be English, Dutch, German and French. The key-notes will be delivered in English. You will find more information about the conference in the near future at the Website www.khbo.be/eda-khbo-dyslexiaconference.

A Tribute to Blanaid Kenny

by Anne Hughes (ex-Director and DAI National Executive Committee member)

The Dyslexia Association lost a very good friend last year. Blanaid Kenny died on November 21st, 2008. Those of you who had the good fortune to know Blanaid, either as a member of the DAI, as a fellow teacher or best of all, as a tutor, will miss her greatly.

When thinking of Blanaid, the words of one of her adult students comes to mind.

After her first visit to Blanaid for tuition she said "Such a lovely lady, I can't believe how kind she was". The middle-aged woman had been apprehensive about working with a tutor, fearing that she would be made to feel stupid as she had at school. Instead she was met by a truly "lovely lady", and came to look forward to her weekly classes as if they were a special treat. Blanaid had an innate graciousness and generosity of spirit, coupled with a genuine interest in people and a deep belief that she should contribute to society in whatever way she could.

Blanaid was a born teacher, so it may surprise many to know that she did not come to teaching until her middle years. After a long illness which confined her to bed as a teenager, Blanaid started up her own business in Dublin and for many years was a very successful entrepreneur. When she left the world of business to enter teaching Blanaid took no half measures. Having developed an interest in dyslexia and learning difficulties, Blanaid undertook additional courses, in London and in Dublin. For many years she combined her full-time teaching role with that of tutor with the Dyslexia Association.

Blanaid is remembered with enormous affection and gratitude by students and teachers from the Sandymount workshop, where she taught for fifteen years. Even when poor health caused her to retire from

the workshop at one point, she was enticed to return and taught for many more years. Maria McAnaney, Co-ordinator at Sandymount described Blanaid as an amazing teacher who never raised her voice, but who got the very best from her adolescent students. As a colleague, Maria says, she was unfailingly thoughtful and generous.

Blanaid coached numerous students through Junior and Leaving Certificate, and it was very touching to hear the tributes from past students which were read at her funeral. But perhaps the work which most reflects Blanaid's spirit was that which very few people knew about. Blanaid Kenny was a lady who could not say 'no'. She could not say no to any student, adolescent or adult, who needed tuition but was not in a position to pay for it. Money was never an issue. If a student needed help then that was enough. Blanaid worked with adults who were barely literate and whose self-esteem was in tatters. She worked with students who had been so turned off by the education system that they had to be coaxed to attend classes. She treated each one as if they were doing her a favour and they responded to her gentle but efficient teaching.

Blanaid Kenny made many friends among her students and earned their respect. She was a most loyal member of the Dyslexia Association for over 20 years. She was a regular attendee at seminars and conferences. She always had an encouraging word and a positive attitude.

What better epitaph could Blanaid have than to say that one always felt better for meeting her.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

Supplementary Admissions Route 2009

The Supplementary Admissions route was implemented to provide a welcome additional entry route to third level for students with disabilities. The scheme is targeted at those students whose disabilities impact on their ability to get the required points for course entry, yet who can show that they have the capability and aptitude for the chosen course. Essentially, it recognises that the points achieved in state examinations do not always reflect the true ability and aptitude of students with disabilities. All participating HEIs have agreed common criteria for the assessment of eligibility for this scheme. It is also expected that places available under supplementary admissions are targeted at those experiencing the greatest educational disadvantage in second-level education.

This year, the assessment for eligibility under the supplementary admissions route has been modified for students with dyslexia. The following is an extract from the full text which can be found on the CAO website:
http://www2.cao.ie/otherinfo/SUPPLEMENTARY_ADMISSIONS_ROUTE.pdf

“Applications and evidence of SpLD will be assessed for levels of disadvantage as outlined below. The level of disadvantage is deemed most significant degree where:

- *Literacy attainment at or below 10th percentile/Standard Score 81, significant discrepancy with general ability; two literacy abilities affected. Evidence of deficits in working memory and processing speed.*
- *Significant level of difficulty experienced by the student, with little or no compensatory strategies in place. Student is unaware of strengths and weaknesses and is struggling to a significant degree to cope with workload.*
- *Severe impact on ability to succeed. Student may or may not have received specialist tuition but it has been relatively ineffective. Student’s written work not reflective of underlying cognitive*

ability to a significant degree.”

Only students who are deemed eligible under this new criteria may be considered for the supplementary admission procedure and be given points leeway.

DAI Response

DAI and other interested groups, such as AHEAD, were invited to a meeting in January to discuss the new 2009 procedure with the operations committee of the Supplementary Admissions procedure. While DAI is fully supportive of the Supplementary Admission route, we have some concerns about the process, and in particular how prescriptive and complicated it has become. At this meeting we outlined some of our concerns about the current procedure, and how it could be improved in future years:

1. Defining disability and level of disadvantage

DAI is concerned over the apparent definition of degree of disability by focusing on literacy percentiles. Literacy percentiles from a psycho-educational assessment only give part of the picture of an individual’s profile. Often a more realistic estimate of functional literacy levels can be made by reviewing samples of written work produced under time pressure.

Dyslexia is also much more complex than simply a literacy difficulty. Other key features of dyslexia include: inefficient information processing, difficulties with memory, sequencing and automaticity of skills. Organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be affected. Therefore when making a judgement as to the level of disadvantage, all of these areas should be considered equally. There is a danger that if literacy skills are the main focus, that some students may be unfairly assessed.

DAI also feels that in order to ensure fairness

Supplementary Admissions Route 2009

consideration needs to be given for the different literacy demands of different courses, e.g. a degree in engineering or architecture will have very different literacy demands to a course in Law, or English. For example, a student with literacy at the 15th percentile will be much more disadvantaged on a language loaded course such as History, as opposed to a course in Engineering or graphic design.

2. Consideration of strengths

A more balanced decision could be made if equal emphasis was given to students' strengths as well as students' weaknesses. If the goal is increased accessibility, as well as selecting the most suitable and able candidates, then due consideration should be given to candidates' aptitude and potential, particularly in the chosen area of study. To quote Leonardo da Vinci:

"You should prefer a good scientist without literary abilities than a literate one without scientific skills".

3. Evidence of disability

In recent years, many students who ticked the box on the CAO did not complete the SIF process fully. This may increase in the current financial climate. Given the significant waiting lists and cost of full psycho-educational assessment, consideration needs to be given to the requirements for evidence of disability. A sub-group with expertise in assessment should be convened to consider a way of rationalising the assessment so that the key up-to-date information is obtained in the most cost-effective and time-effective manner.

Also, rather than being overly prescriptive in

terms of specifying tests, clear guidelines should be given to psychologists in advance of assessments. It really isn't fair to ask parents or teachers to analyse a report for specialist content.

It must be remembered that the report is only one part of the picture; up-to-date information on the impact of the difficulty will also be contained in the school report and in the student's personal statement.

4. Accessible formats

The SIF documentation needs to be made much more accessible and reader friendly to people who have learning difficulties such as dyslexia. DAI regularly receives calls from students, parents and even teachers who struggle to understand the SIF process, and what they are being asked to submit. Many people get very confused by the different requirements for SLD (dyslexia) as opposed to other disabilities, where medical evidence is required. Perhaps, it would be clearer if separate guidelines on the SIF process were available for the different types of disabilities. More effort needs to be made to ensure that the information is understandable and accessible.

Overall, DAI welcomes the efforts to standardise the system to ensure fairness for all. However, we must ensure that the procedure itself is accessible and does not become overly complex. The students' and their needs should be central to the process. If the system becomes too rigid it will lose the ability to see each student as an individual, and to assess their individual needs. By becoming overly complex and onerous, the process may exclude many genuine applicants.

DAI would like to hear from you about your experiences of the supplementary admissions route. How have you found the process? We want to represent your views as best as possible, so please send your comments to:

DAI, 1 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2, or email to info@dyslexia.ie.

Fundraising Events

Golf Classic 8th May 2009

The Mary McKenna Golf Classic in aid of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland will be held on Friday 8th May 2009 in Clontarf Golf Club. Mary McKenna is one of Ireland's best female golfers and she has kindly given her support to this year's fundraising golf classic.

Teams of four cost €400, including dinner after the 18 holes. Scoring will be by Stableford. There will be prizes galore for the winning teams. To book a team, please email info@dyslexia.ie or telephone 01 6790276.



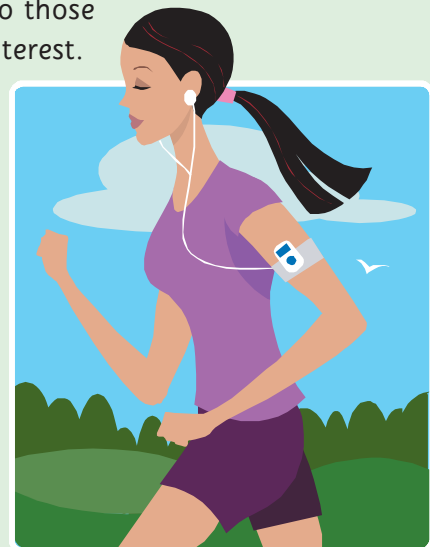
A major raffle will also be held on the day; a huge array of prizes are being organised for this raffle which includes hotel accommodation, a signed Sunderland jersey, a hamper of ROC products, a large Waterford Crystal photo frame and many more. Even if you are unable to attend or not interested in golf, you can still support this worthwhile event by buying some raffle tickets which will be available from national office shortly.

Mini-Marathon 1st June 2009

The 2009 Flora Women's Mini-Marathon will take place on Bank Holiday Monday 1st June 2009. If you are considering taking part, then why not run, jog, walk or even crawl your way through the 10 kilometre course. Sponsorship cards and t-shirts are available to those fundraising for DAI. Please contact DAI now to register your interest.

The money raised will support the work of the Dyslexia Association in providing information to parents, teachers and adults on dyslexia, and will help to fund the provision of specialist tuition to children and adults with dyslexia.

The official entry form will appear in the Evening Herald every Thursday and Saturday from 26th February. Entry can also be done online at www.florawomensminimarathon.ie. The closing date for entries is April 16th (or when the maximum number of entries is reached) – therefore, please register early to avoid disappointment.



Fundraising Events

Sponsored Parachute Jump - April 2009

What a wonderful way to celebrate 90 years on this earth!



Leo Oman, a long-time member of DAI, and his daughter Aisling are doing a sponsored parachute jump to celebrate their 60th and 30th birthdays. Their families and friends are sponsoring the cost of the jump. All other monies raised will be shared between the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, the Cancer Clinical Research Trust and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland.

Please give as generously as you can. Contributions can be sent to:

Omans in Flight Fundraiser,
c/o DAI, 1 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2.

Welcome to our New Psychologists

On 28th October, DAI welcomed two new members of staff. Ian O'Grady and Eimear McMahon have joined our team of psychologists. Thankfully, due to the number of psychologists now working with DAI our assessment waiting lists have reduced quite a bit. Appointments are now available within 3-4 months for children; however, our adult waiting list is somewhat longer. We also operate a short-notice cancellation list for urgent cases.

Bag-Packing Fundraiser in Marks and Spencer

A very big thank you to all those who helped at our recent fundraising bag-packing event in Marks and Spencer, Mary St., Dublin 1.

On the weekend of 17th and 18th January, we raised over €4,900 with your help. Several branches organised volunteers for this event, in particular Kilcock and Dublin Northside. We really appreciate the help given by all the volunteers.

We hope to make this a regular event, so please let us know if you would be willing and able to volunteer for future events.

Laser and Credit Cards

The DAI office is now able to process payments via credit and laser card either in person or over the phone. This means you can now renew your membership, order books, pay for a course, or make a donation over the phone.

There is no additional charge for using laser cards. However, due to the processing costs, a 2% fee applies to any payments made via credit card.



D-Day Walk in Glendalough 2008

by **Caroline Dooley-Martyn** (National Executive Committee Secretary)

This has been our third year running the event in Wicklow National Park, Glendalough. This year we raised over €3,600. All of this money goes back to central funding to provide necessary services to children and adults with dyslexia.

Three walks, different yet scenic attract people of all ages and abilities. This year the weather was very pleasant for walking and many people took the opportunity to take photographs. The stops on route gave people the opportunity to learn a bit about dyslexia, map reading, first aid, pacing and other useful information.



After a walk there is nothing nicer than a relaxing chat over homemade soup and sandwiches and Mark Killeen and the wonderful staff of Glendalough International Youth Hostel deserve a Bridgestone Guide Award for providing us with a fantastic feast.

We are eternally grateful to the teachers and students from St. Declan's College and Donahies Community School who have continued to support us over the years. Staffing difficulties meant that two schools had to drop out this year.

The walk is always very rewarding for the students and for those who organise this event. It is great to hear the excitement in the voices of these students as they come down off the mountain, where many have gained a sense of achievement in their own ability. The event captures the sense of adventure, comradeship and

pleasure that exists in the freedom of the outdoors. The challenge of walking in the outdoors has opened new horizons to many students who before this would not have considered leaving the PC or TV.

Many of the students do not have dyslexia but those who do often find that they no longer feel isolated within their group. For those who have never heard of dyslexia or who misunderstand the condition it has proved to be an opportunity to learn more. Likewise for parents and adults who have come along to support us or have just joined the walk for the company and fresh air it has been a worthwhile and very pleasant day.

We would like to encourage more people to join us and especially we would ask workshops and branches to consider making this an annual day out for the families or the workshop.

The walk is run on a voluntary basis and takes a lot of organisation. We are very grateful to all those who contribute their time and resources to make it a success. This event would not be possible without the kind permission of Wicklow Mountains National Park, Irene O'Brien and George McClafferty (OPW), Glendalough National Youth Hostel and An Oige.

A big thank you goes to: Bill Downes, Marshel McEurlin and the Civil Defence team; Kiernan Gildea and Alan Carroll from Scouting Ireland and the Venturers who kept us safe on the day; Rosie Bissett, Jo Gannon, Madge Daly, Benny Usher, Niav Keating; the National Executive Committee; and finally the Fundraising Committee their families and friends who helped out on the day and without whom this event would not be possible.

Many thanks to our sponsors – Spot Prizes were donated JD Sligo and water was provided by Ian Carey, C&C Group Plc.

The 2009 Walk will be held on September 27th.

Giving Something Back

By **Mary Cosgrave** (National Executive Committee Member)

It is wonderful when people give something back to the association, with their time and effort. We would encourage all parents and all branches to get involved in fundraising efforts both locally and nationally. It is thanks to all this voluntary effort that we are able to make funds available to subsidise workshop fees and assessment fees for financially disadvantaged families, as well as all our other services. Mary Cosgrave, a member of the Dublin Northside Committee and the National Executive Committee shares her thoughts on giving something back...

I have always believed, whenever possible, in “giving something back”. This is why I fundraise for the DAI, for both the National Office and my local Dublin Northside Branch.

I would encourage every member and branch of the DAI to get involved in National Fundraising. Like all charities, the association needs regular fundraising to survive. Everyone can't be involved in every fundraiser, but choose the event that suits you, your family and friends, and volunteer/support/get involved.

Both my children have dyslexia. I doubt they would have been assessed, diagnosed, received any specific teaching or exam accommodations, if the DAI did not exist. They are now both in college, both studying engineering. My husband, daughter, son and I regularly volunteer for and support DAI fundraising events. It is our way of “giving something back”.

This is very easy and enjoyable to do, as we are surrounded by like-minded people in the Dublin Northside Branch. For the past several years, members of the branch have always made the time to fundraise for the DAI, both locally and nationally. They regularly volunteer for and support National Fundraising Events, such as rattling a tin for the D-Day Collection in October. Northside Branch usually undertakes to collect at a location for the day, and a roster of volunteers is set up to cover the day.

Due to lack of volunteers in 2008, D-Day Collections only took place at two locations (one covered by Northside, and the other by Kilcock Branch, with the help of a few members of the DAI National Executive Committee).

Other branches or a group of friends could undertake to collect at other locations around the country. D-Day Collections are not restricted to the Dublin/Meath area but can be done anywhere we have sufficient volunteers and get permission to collect.

Volunteers from the Northside branch and some other branches also helped with the recent fundraising bag-packing collection which took place in the Mary St. Branch of Marks and Spencer in January.

Please do get involved and give something back. Some upcoming fundraisers for your 2009 diary are:

- 8th May – Golf Classic.
- 1st June – Flora Women's Mini Marathon.
- 27th September – 4th Annual D-Day Fun Walk in Glendalough.
- September/October – D-Day Collections.



Pictured are volunteers taking part in the mini-marathon including members of the Northside Branch, National Executive Committee members, DAI staff and friends.

Parent Support is Critical for DAI Branches & Workshops

by **Deirdre McGuinness** (DAI Branch Liaison Officer)

Without adequate parent support at local level many of the very successful DAI Branches and Workshops would cease to exist, which would be to the detriment of the many thousands of children who have done so well as a result of this extra specialised tuition.

The setting up of a Branch and subsequently a Workshop is a long detailed process requiring a lot of commitment from parents and teachers. Initially this involves setting up a Branch committee, raising funds for the appropriate equipment, acquiring suitable premises, training local teachers and identifying local children with dyslexia who would benefit from this service.

DAI Branches and Workshops have existed in Ireland since the early 1970s. They have proven to be a tremendous source of support for children and their parents who are often so bewildered at first as to how to help their newly diagnosed child. Each DAI Branch/Workshop needs to have a voluntary Branch committee made up of a Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Workshop Programme Co-ordinator and ideally at least three other Parents. The committee is essential for the successful administration of the Branch and Workshop, and to ensure best practice and good governance.

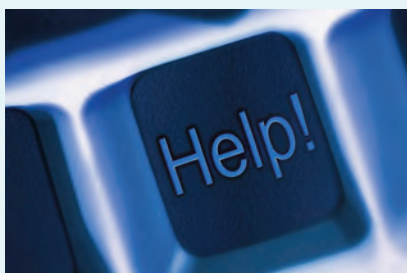
Many of our Branches have very active Committees who dedicate a lot of time and effort into organising fund-raising activities to help raise monies for up-dating equipment and for funding subsidised tuition for those children who would not be able to attend due to financial difficulties. Parents who have participated on a DAI Committee would

always say that they have gained so much from being part of the committee in terms of knowledge of dyslexia, support from other parents and the feeling of giving back to an association which their family has benefitted from. We sincerely thank all of the parents who help out in whatever way possible to ensure the continued success of their local Branch and Workshop. Many parents have even stayed on Committees long after their children have left the workshop because they want to ensure that children with Dyslexia in their area will continue to benefit in the same way as their own child did in the past.

However, some Workshops find it very difficult to get ongoing support from parents, not just for Branch Committee participation, but also in getting support and volunteers for fund-raising events. Some parents don't seem to realise that it is for the benefit of all the children including their own and that without adequate parent support the workshop may close, and unfortunately, this has happened in the past to a few DAI Branches/Workshops.

It is not fair that some parents give more of their voluntary time than others. We do a lot of public information talks on Dyslexia throughout the country, and many towns are crying out for the setting up of a Branch and a Workshop, but it takes time, much local support and the necessary finance.

So, to those who are lucky to be close to and/or part of a DAI Branch and Workshop, please treasure what you have and give the help that is needed to ensure the ongoing success of these essential services in your local community.



New Offaly Branch

A group of interested parents and teachers have formed a new Branch in Offaly. The group has had several successful meetings with parents and teachers over the past few months with staff from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland coming down to offer support and advice. The group now hope to commence workshops for children in Offaly with Dyslexia in the near future, for which they are presently compiling a pre-enrolment list of children who are interested in attending.

The workshops will be held in Daingean National School on a Monday Night from 5-7pm and are for children over 8 years of age, who have been assessed and diagnosed as having Dyslexia and who are registered members of the DAI. If you are interested in your child attending the workshops please contact them on 086-6005606 / 086-8258511 or email offalydyslexiagroup@iolfree.ie for a registration form.

The group would like to thank all those who have supported them especially EBS Building Society, Oak Partnership, Mahon Oil and the Community Foundation of Ireland, whose donations will go a long way to helping get the workshop up and running a lot earlier than was anticipated and provide a much needed service for the children of Offaly. The group would also like to thank the Board of Management and Staff of Daingean National School who have made the school available for the purposes of the workshop.

Top 5 Reasons for DAI Membership

Become part of a powerful community. Join the 2700 families who are currently members of DAI. There is strength in unity, and the size of our membership helps greatly when we are lobbying and campaigning for better services for people with dyslexia.

Support the association. In 2008, only 27% of DAI's income came from government grants. The remainder had to be raised through fundraising, fees for services and membership fees. Your membership fees ensure that the association will be there when your family, and other families, need us.

Get the information you need. Our members Newsletter is issued twice each year. Members can also now choose to receive regular email bulletins to be kept up-to-date of new information and upcoming events in your area. If you don't keep yourself up-to-date you may miss out on essential new information. The DAI website is also a great source of information www.dyslexia.ie

Save money at DAI events. Take advantage of the reduced member's rates for DAI events such as our Annual Conference.

Avail of DAI Services. Membership of DAI is needed to avail of our tuition services, e.g. to access our lists of specialist one-to-one tutors, or to attend a DAI workshop class.

New Spelling Programme

Included here is some information on a recently published spelling programme that may be of interest to many of our readers. This programme is the work of one of our own DAI tutors - Eilish O'Mahony is a tutor on the DAI Junior Certificate Exam Preparation course run in Dublin.

Following many years of delivering her successful multisensory spelling programme, Eilish O'Mahony finally got to see the programme published and launched both on the Irish market and beyond. The publication, cleverly called The Spell Write Right Programme, is a games-based programme that effortlessly teaches students of all ages how to understand the differences between confusing pairs of words, particularly students with literacy difficulties or dyslexic tendencies.



Over the last fifteen years this games approach to spelling has proved extremely popular with students. The games and activities include: 'Word Bingo', Flash Cards (for Snap and Team Games), Table Quizzes, Anagrams, Cloze Procedures, Crosswords, Wordsearches, Cryptic Puzzlers, Spelling Tests, Revision Exercises and much more. The activities are combined so that the spelling of each 'confusing' pair of words is reinforced and the learning experience consolidated. The large (A2) Visual Word Cards (posters) contain an image of each confusing word for further visual reinforcement.

The Spell Write Right Programme equips students with strategies, problem-solving techniques and the confidence to work out the differences between common, everyday, confusing words. Its structured multisensory approach is highly adaptable and flexible. A fun resource for use with students of all ages and abilities, Spell Write Right can be used with

individuals and/or class groups. Extremely user-friendly, Spell Write Right is suitable for use by tutors, teachers, psychologists, speech and language therapists, parents and all other education professionals.

The programme consists of two Teacher Books, 16 full-colour specially designed educational A2 Visual Word Cards (Posters), 8 A3 Size Double-sided Game Boards (Bingo) with 16 different and engaging games and comes complete with 100 Plastic Colour Counters.



A special launch price for the Spell Write Right pack is offered at €119.50 (including vat) and this pack is all you will require for up to eight students. Class sets are also available. The programme is available from the co-publishers:

Outside The Box Learning Resources
www.otb.ie
Tel.: 045 409322.

Learning Horizons
www.learninghorizons.ie
Tel.: 01 4111537.

X-Mark Reading Tool and Bookmark

In November, the x-mark reading tool and bookmark was launched by two past students of the Institute for Art Design and Technology (IADT) in Dun Laoghaire, both of whom have personal experience of dyslexic-type reading difficulties.

Christine Caplice and Eirik Grinde are directors of the CG Design studio in Oslo and graduates of IADT from graphic design animation and interactive media courses. Since establishing their studio in 2002 one of their development projects has been the design of this reading aid.

The x-mark bookmark is for everyone, for: frequent and first time readers alike, students and teachers, people with dyslexia, people with tired eyes, or for those who simply enjoy reading a book on the way home from work.

comprehension. The colour can also help to reduce the black white contrast particularly when reading very dense text.

The x-mark can also be used to mark the last line before putting the book away, making it easy to pick up where you left off and cut down on unnecessary re-reading.



The x-mark bookmark currently comes in many colours. X-marks will be available from the DAI office in the coming weeks (cost just one Euro). DAI has also commissioned some DAI themed x-marks which will be available at our Annual Conference and AGM on April 25th.

For further information please visit the x-mark website:

www.xmark.no



The x-mark helps to guide your eye on the current line while reading, which can aid concentration and

Workshop for Adult Literacy Tutors on Dyslexia

A workshop to give adult literacy tutors a better understanding of dyslexia and a knowledge of the specialist strategies needed when working with adults with dyslexia will be held on May 16th in the city centre in Dublin. Workshop fee is €60 per tutor.

Topics covered include:

- Defining dyslexia.
- Identifying learning styles.
- Reading comprehension strategies.
- How would I identify an adult with dyslexia?
- Multi-sensory teaching programmes.
- How computers and assistive technology can help.

If you are a qualified adult literacy tutor and would like to apply for this course, please send a stamped self-addressed envelope to DAI, 1 Suffolk St., Dublin 2, clearly marked Adult Literacy Tutors Course. Once the programme for the day has been finalised, course information and an application form will be posted to you. Information will also be available from the DAI website shortly.

DAI Courses for Teachers

DAI In-Service Courses for Teachers

DAI Teachers' Courses planned for the coming year are as follows:

- D Hotel, Drogheda, Co. Louth. – 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th March.
- Dunmanway, West Cork. – 6th to 10th July 2009 (1 week summer in-service course).
- Venue TBC – 19th, 26th September and 10th, 17th October.
- Venue TBC – 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th November.

This course is designed for both primary and second level teachers. Topics covered will include:

- the history of dyslexia
- what does it mean to have dyslexia
- recognising indicators in the classroom
- interpreting psycho-educational assessment reports
- implementing recommendations
- teaching reading comprehension skills
- the writing process
- co-existing conditions
- dyslexia and maths
- causal theories
- why reading is difficult
- screening and assessment
- teaching phonics
- spelling
- creating an inclusive classroom environment
- assistive technology and IT

All courses are 20 hours long and certificates of attendance are issued.
Fee: €250.00.

Further information and application forms are available (once venues and dates have been finalised) from DAI, 1 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2, and also on the teachers section of our website: www.dyslexia.ie/teach.htm.



Workshop for Second Level Teachers

A new one-day Workshop for Second Level teachers on dyslexia is being developed. This course will address how best to accommodate students with dyslexia within the second level school environment.

This course will be held in the city centre in Dublin on October 3rd, 2009. Additional information will be available in the Autumn 2009 Newsletter.

DAI Course For Students in the Leaving Certificate Cycle

In September/October, DAI will run a free one-day course for students with dyslexia in the Leaving Cert. cycle, i.e. students in 4th, 5th and 6th year at second level.

It has been decided to run this course at the start of the academic year, as this is when it will be most beneficial to the students.

Further information will be available in the Autumn 2009 Newsletter which will be issued to all members in late August/early September 2009.

DAI Courses for Parents and Students

Courses for Parents and Junior Cycle Students

DAI plans to run 3 courses for Parents and Junior Cycle students this year as follows:

March 21st Galway
October 10th Venue TBC
November 7th Venue TBC

Topics covered on the Parents Course will include:

- Understanding Dyslexia.
- Understanding the assessment report.
- Accessing support in school, e.g. learning support, Irish exemption, exam accommodations.
- Practical suggestions for parents and helping with homework.
- Planning for the future – second level and beyond.
- Computers and assistive technology.

Fee per parent: €60 DAI Members €85 Non-Members.

(Coffee/tea will be provided at the mid-morning break, but lunch is not included.)

A free course for Junior Cycle students with dyslexia will be run concurrently with the Parents' Courses. This students' course will be relevant to students in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year at second level.

Topics covered on this course will include:

- Understanding the assessment, and learning strengths.
- Self esteem.
- Organisation of work, time management and planning including an exercise on planning study and revision timetables.
- Study techniques.
- Note taking including writing exercises based on Junior Certificate English, History and Geography.
- Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE).
- Computers and how they can help.
- Subject choice for 5th year.

There is no fee for the students' course but students' families must be current members of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (annual membership fee is just €40).

DAI Parents' and Junior Cycle Students' Course Booking Form

Name(s): _____ DAI Membership No.: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No. _____

I wish to book _____ places on the Parents' Course and _____ place on the Students' Course.

Students' Year in school: 1st Year 2nd Year 3rd Year

I enclose € _____ for admission for the DAI Parents' and Students' Course which will be held in _____ (venue) on _____ (date).

Wine Tasting Evening a Great Success

A very successful Wine Tasting Evening in aid of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland was held on Friday the 14th in the Tara Towers Hotel on Merrion Road in Dublin. Attended by over one hundred and fifty supporters of the DAI, the evening kicked off at 7.30pm. Guests were served wine from EnoWine and food supplied by Carl Oppermann Fine Cuisine. The Dublin Lord Mayor Cllr Eibhlinn Byrne arrived shortly after 8.00pm and was very gracious in her praise of the DAI and the work we undertake for all people living with Dyslexia. We are very grateful to the Lord Mayor for her support. DAI's National President Jo Gannon thanked everyone for their support.



Guests enjoyed sampling the wide array of fine wines provided by EnoWine, with the option of ordering more if they discovered a particular favourite or favourites! Many people took the opportunity to order some nice wine for the upcoming Christmas holidays.

The highlight of the evening was the raffle and auction. The top three prizes donated were sold in an auction, and over 40 other donated prizes were raffled off. We would like to thank everyone who donated prizes, and in particular the three fantastic auctioned prizes:

- o Karen Doran of the Temple Hair and Beauty Lounge donated a full day of pampering and a champagne lunch at her Beauty Lounge in Templeogue.



- o A weekend for two plus evening dinner in the exclusive Barberstown Castle was donated by Ken Healy, the proprietor of Barberstown Castle.

- o Tulfarris House and Golf Resort in Wicklow donated a Four Ball on their beautiful course on the shores of the Blessington Lakes.



Carl Oppermann of Oppermann Fine Cuisine offered a rather unique prize on the evening. He worked with Bill Cullen on the making of The Apprentice and while he knew who won, he had been sworn to secrecy and wouldn't even hint at the winner!! Guests at the wine tasting evening were told to guess who their favourite to win was and if they turned out to be right (the Apprentice winner wasn't announced until 5th December), Mr. Oppermann would cook a meal for four in the winner's home – supplying the food, cooking the meal and he promised “even doing the washing up”.

Sincere thanks to everyone who was involved in making this evening a great success both financially and socially! However, a very special thank you goes to Edel and Dermot Williams – their huge effort and support ensured the success of the event. Special thanks also goes to Gerry Palmer - he was our wonderful compère for the evening.

If you missed this event, this time round – watch out for the next one which won't be too far away. We hope that this Wine Tasting Evening will be an annual event, a great opportunity not only to fundraise, but also to have a fun night out.

DAI Summer Schools 2009

An **Early Intervention Summer School** is usually held in Scoil Mhuire, **Sandymount**, Dublin 4, for three weeks each July. This is a summer school for children who are finding school life difficult. Children do not need to have been assessed and children with conditions other than dyslexia are welcome. Further information on this summer school is available from the Early Intervention Summer School, c/o Scoil Mhuire, Gilford Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4.



Galway Branch Summer School - the Galway branch of the Dyslexia Association usually run a summer school for a week in August (usually the third week of August) at the Galway Educate Together NS. Classes in reading, spelling, writing, tutorials and computer skills. Age group 6 years and above.

For further information contact 087 7588258.

Cork Branch Summer School - the Cork branch of the Dyslexia Association usually run a summer school for a week in July (usually the second week in July), at Scoil Mhuire Junior School, Sydney Place, Wellington Road, Cork. Classes in reading, spelling, games/physical activity, art and/or drama. Limited places available.

For further information contact the Cork branch at 087 9831837.

Older People and Literacy Research

TSA Consultancy is currently undertaking research on behalf of the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).

The research is with older people, over the age of 60 years, who have not engaged in any literacy services.

The purpose of the research is to examine attitudes, experiences and views of older people to their literacy difficulties; to investigate their coping strategies; to identify education and service needs and any barriers impeding their return to education.

TSA would like to interview people for the research in both rural and urban areas.

If you would be interested in participating in this research or if you would like further information, please contact *Tanya Lalor* at:

Address: TSA Consultancy, Bawnogue Enterprise Centre, Clondalkin, Dublin 22.

Telephone: 01 457 7420 Email: tanyalalor@tsa.ie

BDA Conference Report *by Mary Ball, DAI Director of Education.*

Dyslexia: Making Links - From Theory to Practice

Crid Rawlings and I attended two days of the four-day conference organised by the British Dyslexia Association, which took place in Oxford from February 27th to 28th, 2009. This conference is a follow-up on the larger international conference in Harrogate last spring. The emphasis this year is on practical application of theory and research. At least half of the sessions were master-classes on specific topics e.g. dyslexia and learning; using ICT to support dyslexic learners in literacy; linking language, reading and comprehension in research and practice; dyslexia and self-esteem. I have picked out those sessions that I found most useful for our work here.

There is growing conviction among the research community, most cogently argued by Professor Margaret Snowling of York University, that dyslexia should be viewed as dimensional. While reading and writing are the tasks most affected, dyslexia affects other aspects of learning in different ways at different stages of a person's life and work. It affects each individual differently. Dyslexia does not have 'clear cut' boundaries. In addition, it co-exists with other learning difficulties to the extent that it is rare to find 'pure' dyslexia.

Comment: This understanding of learning difficulties should reinforce the need for appropriate levels of support across the spectra of learning and work environments; not every child is looking for learning support. Not every adult is looking for large scale accommodations. However, the understanding of difficulties as dimensional makes urgent the need for general classroom teaching to be sufficiently informed that it offers support to the child at risk from dyslexia from very mild to severe. The same principles apply to the workplace. What is needed here in the first place is a growing awareness by all who work together of how dyslexia affects adults and how even minor accommodations can make work life more efficient and less stressful for workers with dyslexia.

Professor Snowling and Charles Hulme have a recent publication providing an up-to-date review of our knowledge of developmental disorders of language,

learning and cognition. The book is called 'Developmental Disorders of Language, Learning and Cognition' and is published by Wiley-Blackwell.

The session I attended on ICT gave an excellent overview of the tools that are available to assist learners who have dyslexia. We are familiar with many of them e.g. WordShark, NumberShark, Clicker, Lexia, Inspiration. What amazed me was their versatility - at the hands of an expert. Two caveats were given:

- 1) Nothing replaces specialist teaching: ICT is a tool not a teacher!
- 2) To use ICT most effectively time for training and technical support is essential.

The following websites offer free demos and/or downloads: www.inspiration.com
www.sparkspace.com www.clarosoftware.com
www.penfriend.ltd.uk demo@texthelp.com

Professor Robert Burden's session on Social and Emotional Perspectives on Dyslexia was a welcome broadening of perspective. Professor Burden's work in the area of self-esteem and self identity in people who have dyslexia is familiar to us. His address took us through the workings of motivation and its importance in the learning process as well as the whole area of self-efficacy i.e. how confident do I feel that I can do what is asked of me? His presentation mapped the key features required to create an effective learning experience:

- Significance: the learner needs to see the value to him of the task
- Purpose beyond the here and now: he must be able to see beyond this particular task to the wider relevance
- Shared intention: teacher has clear intention in the task; child understands and shares the intention.
- Other features include the child having a sense of being in control of his learning, thinking and action; feeling competent; setting goals, able to accept challenge and a positive attitude.

Comment: One participant accurately suggested that this is the unspoken message /effectiveness of the Obama line 'Yes, we can'.

One of the explicit, key features for teaching and learning is a sense of belonging. It was suggested

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that one of the reasons for success in 'independent' schools is a sense of identity and pride of belonging.

Comment: I think this latter reflection goes to the heart of what DAI workshops achieve and I hope they will continue to provide such an experience. Nevertheless it is an aim for all parents and staff to develop the atmosphere in school and classroom that generates this sense of belonging and identity.

Professor Rod Nicholson is known to many through his Dyslexia Screening Test and somewhat controversial link between movement and dyslexia. The closing remarks during his presentation acknowledged the controversy around 'complementary interventions' and also acknowledged that learning fails for many reasons e.g. no effort, no motivation, no success, interference, bad habits, confusion, pre-requisites missing. Sometimes it may be useful to remove or get rid of 'learning inhibitors'. As such, complementary approaches can substantially improve morale, self belief etc. and this alone is

enough to cause marked improvement. However, good practice for educating children with dyslexia has been largely vindicated i.e. multisensory learning and a systematic approach. Professor Nicholson concluded that we need to expand the idea of 'learning disabilities' to 'learning abilities' and teach accordingly. Have we heard this before?!

Two research psychologists from York gave a detailed and enthralling account of research they have conducted under Professor Snowling into interventions for poor comprehenders. Working on the knowledge that dyslexia and language impairment are often co-existent, their interventions targeted systematic oral language development, using among other interventions vocabulary enrichment exercises, developing figurative language and listening skills as the foundation of learning. They recommended a book by Beck, McKeown: Bringing Words to Life. With or without the book the research focuses our attention on the importance of oral language skills. They also concluded with the reminder that the most effective way to make progress is 'a little and often'. The University of York website is always worth visiting.

Thank You to our Funders and Donors (2008)

DAI would like to thank the Department of Education and Science (Further Education Section) for granting us funding for 2008 towards our adult services. This funding enables us to run our very successful Career Paths course for unemployed adults with dyslexia, in conjunction with FÁS, as well as enabling us to provide some assessment and tuition to adults who are financially disadvantaged.

DAI would also like to thank the Special Education Section in the Department of Education and Science who gave us a grant towards the cost of running our information service and national office, as well as enabling us to offer a limited number of funded assessments and some subsidised tuition for children from financially disadvantaged families.

Thank you to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs who granted DAI funding for 2008 to enable us to support our network of branches and workshops nationwide. This funding helps with support visits to branches and workshops, training for committees and workshop staff, and ongoing development of our branch and workshop guidelines/manuals to ensure best practice and quality of service.

DAI would also like to thank all our other donors - individuals, private companies and other bodies, for their kind donations and legacies received during 2008.



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AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA | DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE



An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe
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Department of Community, Rural
and Gaeltacht Affairs



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