

North Eastern IA

Newsletter

Pat Ahern – 1938 - 2020

Former North Eastern IA Secretary



It is with a heavy heart and great sadness that we advise you of the death of a much-loved lady and friend, Pat Ahern.

Pat joined IA in April 1988 very soon after her surgery and recovery. She immediately offered her support to the current Regional Secretary, Irene Betts. Pat's organisational and secretarial skills, together with her tremendous energy and commitment, made her an invaluable asset to North Eastern IA.

Consequently, on Irene's retirement in 1994, Pat took over the role of Regional Secretary. She proved to be an inspiration to us all. She also became involved with IA at National level as an Elected Representative for a period of time.

North Eastern IA, under her guidance, went from strength to strength. Pat was always attentive and considerate to everyone, but especially Local Members. She was supportive and understanding to anyone who was approaching surgery. She never hesitated to take a request from someone needing support, even if she only heard the evening before the visit was required, she'd arrange a visit or phone call for them.

She would remember the names of people she'd talked to and greeted everyone warmly at our Regional Meetings. Pat always made everyone feel important and of value.

Pat was a skilled organiser. She organised and hosted many National IA events including National Councils in 1991 at Newcastle University, National Council 2002 at Gateshead Marriott and National Council 2008 at Newcastle Marriott Gosforth Park. She also organised three Young IA Weekends, two at the Springfield Hotel, Gateshead, in 1997 and 2000 and one in 2004 at the Premier Inn. Pat also organised Visitors Courses; some were for local members, others were for National members. Pat knew the value of visitors support pre-surgery, as well as later on, when adapting to a new life with an Ileostomy or Internal Pouch.

Another area that was important for Pat was forging links with the medical professionals at all the region's major hospitals. Pat valued the role the Specialist Nurses and Community Nurses played in the treatment and recovery of us all. She and other Committee Members would attend the Specialist Nurses' Open Days around the region.

Another aspect of support that Pat felt was important for us was the appliances and other equipment, which were available. She developed good relationships with each of



Ileostomy & Internal Pouch
Association

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the Ostomy Appliance Companies. She appreciated all the work the Reps did and valued their attendance and contributions at our Regional Meetings.

Pat radiated tireless energy and love for all those she met. She was the heart of our local committee, where she would bring everyone together for Committee Meetings, visits, Member Meetings and our much loved social events, including attendance each year at National Council. She would love our weekends away. Being together with her girls (including Stuart – he didn't mind) would give her so much pleasure and she loved being called "Mother". She also loved getting dressed up at IA conferences and socialising with friends with a glass of wine or two.

I have a fond memory of going to the Springfield Hotel, Gateshead in 2000 which was when I had the pleasure of meeting Pat for the first time. My Stoma Care Nurse, ahead of surgery, recommended I contact Pat. I arranged to meet up with her at the event and was greeted so warmly I remember it well. Being shown around and invading a yoga class I asked Pat – "So who has a stoma?" to be told, "Everyone!" - well let's just say that changed my life for the better!

On reflection of Pat, Lynn Philipson often laughs when remembering Pat registering at one of the conferences and they couldn't see her name. Pat tapped her badge with her broly and said, "Pat Ahern dear", in the poshest of voices. Lynn's memory of Pat was that of a true lady who did everything with enthusiasm and class. Pat's zest for life impressed Lynn so much, she was often heard saying to her friends and family – "I want to be like Pat when I get to her age!"

Pat shared many great stories about family holidays and theatre visits. She talked about her family with great fondness. Her husband Michael, their Daughters Patsy and Joanne and their families and their Son Steven, all meant everything to her. When sadly she lost her dearly loved husband, Michael, this left a massive void in her life. Michael was a wonderful support to Pat in all the work she did for IA. He was by her side at every meeting, so he also contributed an enormous amount to North Eastern IA. They were a great Team.

Pat was Regional Secretary until 2008 when she stood down, however, she resumed her role 2 years later. During those last years as Secretary, Pat organised one more special occasion, which was for Northern Eastern IA's 50th Anniversary on 26th January 2013. She contacted so many people who had contributed to the local group and invited them to join us. Many of them did. It was a wonderful celebration.

Unfortunately, due to illness, Pat made the decision to completely finish her work for IA in 2015, however she continued to attend meetings, whenever possible.

For over 27 years, Pat made a significant contribution to IA and to so many of us.

Pat will always have a special place in my heart, remembering not only the IA events, but the times I would visit her and the chats we would have, we would laugh and sometimes get a little emotional over a cup of coffee, putting the world to rights – a very good friend indeed! She was a proud, kind and special lady leaving lots of loving memories – Pat, I will miss you forever!

Pauline Fallows

North Eastern IA

(I would like to extend my thanks to Eithne Fitzgerald who has assisted me with this tribute to Pat)



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