

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

SPRING 2023

Just like you, Mags is the softness and strength at the heart of MQI.

Over 25 years at MQI, Mags has dedicated her life to helping and comforting people experiencing homelessness and addiction. What is it that keeps her so passionate and committed to her role? **Mags wants you to know her story...**



Mags, MQI Project Worker

You'd feel at ease right away with Mags. She's petite, yet she carries herself with the authority of experience. There's a deep well of empathy in her eyes, and the warmth of her voice comes from a bedrock of wisdom. Everything about Mags radiates compassion and understanding. So you feel you could tell her anything.

"I was only in my 20s when I decided to come to work at Merchants Quay Ireland." she tells us. "Back in the 1980's, drugs had become a terrible problem in my community. People were dying in the stairways from using drugs. And there was a huge public fear around AIDS and HIV viruses which were killing people. I wanted to understand what this drug heroin was. Because of what it was doing to our children's lives and the devastating effect it was having on our communities."

On a personal level, the drugs crisis ripped its way through the very heart of Mags' family - two of her brothers died from suicide, one died from overdose and another succumbed to AIDS. Burying four children was too much for her parents to bear. Mags' father passed away from the stress, and her mother died of a broken heart soon after.

"There was nowhere to turn to for help in the 1980's. It was devastating to have to come to terms with everything alone. I kept asking God for an answer to the question, 'Why my family?' Working at Merchants Quay Ireland helped me to understand that this problem affects everyone. And it's in communities all over Ireland."

Working with clients at Merchants Quay Ireland, Mags helps people in a way that also honours her brothers' memory. "When MQI opened the doors, we had about 20 – 30 people a day visiting. Today

"My work gives me great comfort. To see even a little smile on the face of a person going back out the door with a bit of hope. I can go home and say to myself, 'I was able to help someone today.'"

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we see at least 120 people a day who are struggling with addiction and are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. It's a massive problem. It can be very, very hard to see someone's son, brother, daughter, sister, mother or father walk through our door, knowing that they have nowhere else to go. I want to help people and comfort them, so this is what I do at MQI."

Drugs haven't gone away, but your support of MQI's health-led response reaches people. Even when they're in active addiction, clients have a safe place to come where they can tell us anything. There's no fear of feeling dirty, being judged or discriminated against. People struggling with addiction are given advice and information, medical help, mental health counselling and a pathway out of drugs and onwards to recovery when they're ready. Because of your help.

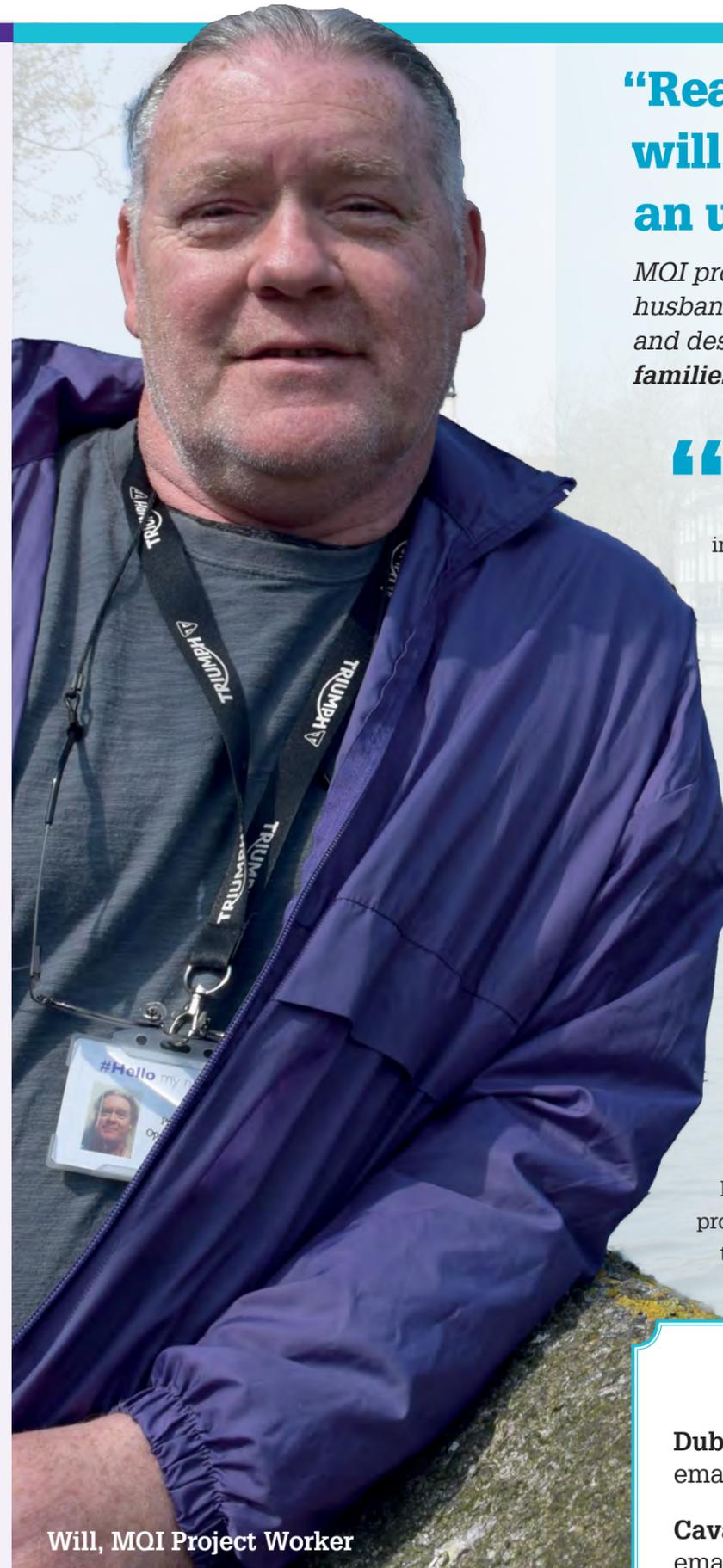
Just like you, Mags is the softness and strength at the heart of MQI. Because the good that we do comes back to us.

"My work gives me great comfort." says Mags, "To see even a little smile on the face of a person going back out the door with a bit of hope. I can go home and say to myself, 'I was able to help someone today.'"

Your generosity works every day at MQI through Mags and her colleagues. Thank you for giving comfort, dignity and hope to people who need us. ■

Overdose deaths in Ireland are one of the highest within the EU

With the right services and support, lives can be saved. Every drug death is a family tragedy. When a person is lost to overdose, it creates a ripple effect that reverberates through families, communities, and even generations. We have a health-led, progressive drugs strategy, but it will be worth nothing if the scale of human suffering through addiction is not reduced, and all parts of Irish society will need to play a role.



Will, MQI Project Worker

"Reaching out is one of the hardest things people will ever do - we give them the tools to cope with an unmanageable situation."

MQI project worker, Will Carroll, speaks every day with mams, dads, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives who have a loved one struggling with addiction. He hears the pain and desperation as it surfaces. Thanks to your kindness Will is there every day for families, who have a loved-one struggling with addiction.

"These families never asked to become part of the world of drug misuse. But they find themselves thrown into the chaos of it. And they really struggle to cope," says Will. For 16 years, he's seen how people with a loved-one in addiction live in isolation and shame. They keep the secret from neighbours, friends and even other close family members. So that nobody else knows, until the burden becomes too heavy to carry alone.

"There isn't a family in this country that hasn't been touched in some way by problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling or mental ill-health," says Will. So why is it that people suffer in silence?

In Will's experience, the isolation that stops people asking for help is rooted in shame.

"If you take away the word 'addiction' and think of another chronic illness, generally people don't immediately know how to cope. So you go to a medical professional, it's explained to you what the diagnosis is, what the treatment and

the outcome might be," explains Will.

"But families with a loved-one in addiction don't want the rest of the community knowing what's happening. Sometimes because they feel it must be partly their fault... like in some way it's their failure, so they struggle on alone. There's huge guilt and self-blame coming with that. It's such a lonely place to be."

It takes bravery, and often total desperation, to reach out. The support families find at MQI... because of your generosity starts with a phone call.

"Sometimes we talk with just one person in the family, as often as they want. And the coping skills they learn can be shared with the others at home. I'd encourage people, when they're ready, to take comfort in group support. Because others are going through the same trauma who are further along the road. There's great support and learning in sharing what has worked and what maybe hasn't. Things become easier to deal with when you find you're not alone in what you're going through. And sometimes you'll help others who are struggling with the same things."

You, as part of our MQI family, are woven into the fabric of that support. Your help keeps this work of the heart going, touching the lives of families who keep loving and living. Thank you for your generosity, your compassion and your faith. ■

If you need family support, MQI is here to help

Dublin: Will Carroll 086 183 2343 or email william.carroll@mqi.ie

Cavan & Monaghan: 049 437 9160 or email info.cavan.monaghan@mqi.ie

East Coast: 0404 34009 or 086 466 84 28 or email shane.vonmetzradt@mqi.ie

Midlands: 090 641 7095 or email infoathlone@mqi.ie

Meet Hannah, a sister, daughter, friend – and our MQI Hero.

Hannah walked 50 kilometers in memory of her youngest brother, Ivan. He's the second child in her family to die of addiction.

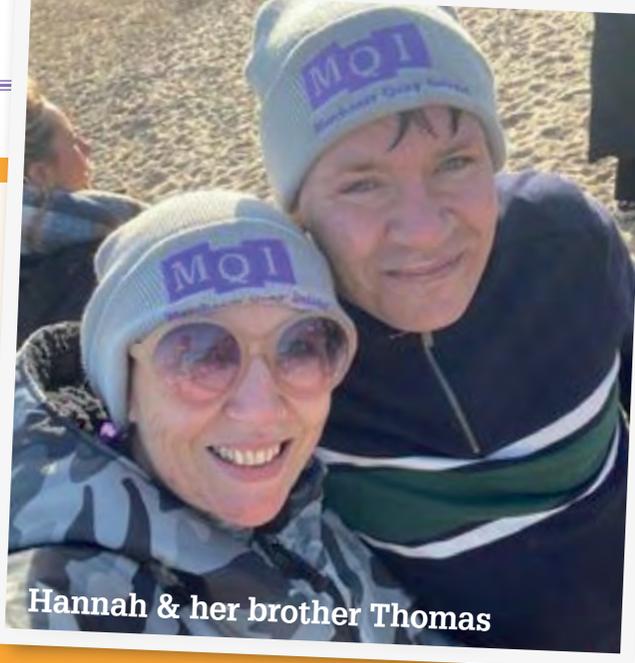
Hannah wanted to share with you how grief empowers her to speak out.

“There were six in our family and we had a very happy childhood. Mum and dad made sure we'd have wonderful memories. We had love, we had everything.” Hannah's older brother Luke was the first to lose his life to addiction in 2010. “It started in his teenage years, just drinking,” she explains, “he didn't want the party to end, and at that age you just don't see it.”



Join our MQI Heroes

We invite you to take part in the VHI Women's Mini Marathon and join #TeamMQI to support our dedicated female service, Jane's Place, on June 4th. Should you choose to run, jog or walk, you will be helping to end the silence and stigma for vulnerable women. **To take part please call Siobhra on 01 524 0139 or email communityfundraising@mqi.ie to find out more and get your official MQI t-shirt and pack.**



Hannah & her brother Thomas

“The stigma is still very much out there, and it angers me so much. It's affecting everybody and if we sit here in silence, we're not going to be able to move on and break the taboo surrounding addiction.”

Losing one brother was devastating for Hannah and her family. When Ivan, the youngest, was caught up in drugs, her parents moved house to protect him and their other children. “Mum and dad thought they could get us all away from the problem,” Hannah tells us. “Ivan's addiction put huge strain on everyone. We were worried every time the phone or the doorbell rang. It's exhausting, carrying that big weight, thinking ‘How can this be happening again?’”

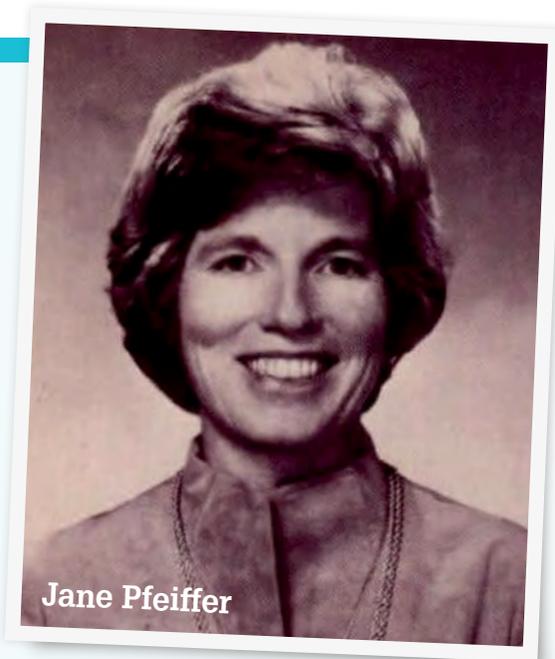
The grief Hannah's family copes with shouldn't need to be hidden. “We each have pain, but in different ways,” she explains. “There was so much love in Ivan and Luke, their lives had value and they're missed every day. There are people from all walks of life who fall into this horrible, horrible trap.”

Honouring Ivan's memory by walking, playing his music and sharing her memories of him, is Hannah's way of making sense of the loss. She wants everyone to know that it's okay to get help for yourself, and to grieve.

Just like you, Hannah is helping to provide MQI services for people and families coping with drug mis-use. Just like you, she's our hero. Thank you for your grace and compassion towards people who should never feel alone in their struggle. ■

A tribute to one woman's kindness.

In 2019, Jane Pfeiffer, a cherished American supporter of Merchants Quay for many years, passed away leaving a gift in her Will to support our work into the future. This gift was utterly transformative and has been ringfenced to support the female services offered by MQI.



Throughout her life, Jane supported homeless and drug services in New York and on a trip to Dublin came across MQI. She made time to visit our service in Dublin and chat to staff. In addition to caring for those less fortunate Jane was a trailblazing woman in business. She was the second female vice President of IBM and Chairman of the board of NBC in 1978. At that time she was the highest ranking female executive in American broadcasting. She was the living embodiment of female potential and empowerment at a time when female equality wasn't always guaranteed.

MQI recently opened Jane's place, a wellbeing

centre in Dublin for women with complex needs of addiction, homelessness and poor mental health. For women who are often ashamed, traumatised and in crisis, this is a safe place in the city where they get the support and kindness they need to rebuild their lives.

As a token of our deep appreciation for Jane's support of our work, we decided to name our first ever dedicated service for women in her honour. Her compassion and kindness are far reaching and will live on in the hope, safety and support offered to every woman who arrives at the door of Jane's Place.

Thank You Jane! ■

Share your story in the MQI Book of Love.

Leaving a donation to MQI in your Will, small or large, is a beautiful way to pass forward your values and support this healing work. Another way to leave a legacy is to contribute your story to MQI's Book of Love.

By sharing your story in MQI Book of Love, you leave a legacy of hope to our clients.

We publish the Book of Love once a year. Copies are kept in all of our services for clients to read. As clients rebuild their lives and embark on a new future, they can take great encouragement and inspiration directly from you, in your words.

There's also a copy kept in the Adam and Eve's Franciscan friary, so your story will live on there forever.

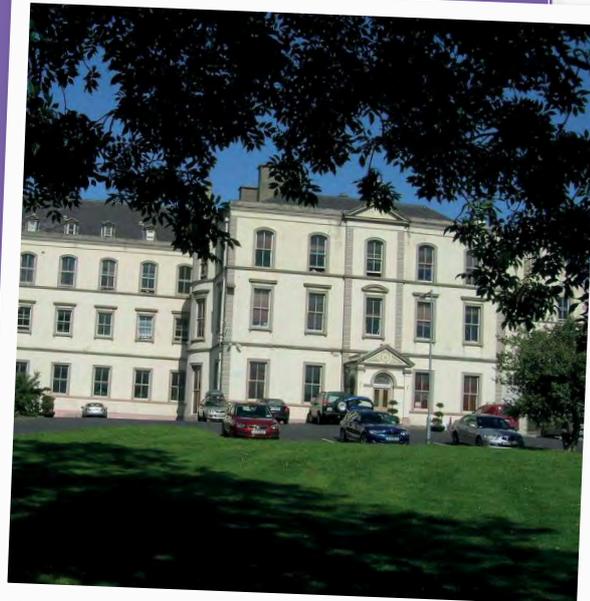
Just send back the page enclosed to be included in the 2023 MQI Book of Love.

Thank you for sharing the love and hope.



Your warm welcome to MQI's High Park Supporter Open Day!

We would love it if you would join us in the heart of Drumcondra at MQI's High Park Residential Rehabilitation Centre on Saturday 10th June, 11am-2pm. Meet the dedicated staff you help support and enjoy a guided tour with past and present clients. Call Shauna at 01 524 0139 to reserve your place.



A Springtime Wish List



Can you help by donating essential supplies for people who are sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation?



- ✓ Waterproof rain pants, track pants and leggings
- ✓ Gently used trainers/runners
- ✓ New, packaged socks and jocks, sports bras, and underwear to restore dignity
- ✓ Feminine hygiene products, toiletries, and shaving gear for a fresh start
- ✓ Bath towels (second hand is absolutely fine!) for people needing a hot shower



Big Wish

Gravel to create paths for the Horticultural Therapy Garden at High Park drug-free residential recovery centre. **€2,000.**

Items can also be dropped off in person to MQI at **24 Merchants Quay** (just past the Riverbank homeless centre) from 10:00am to 3:00pm Monday to Friday.

Thank you!



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

24 Merchants Quay,
P.O. Box 11958,
Dublin 8

To make your gift by phone: please ring us on 01 524 0139.



Telephone: 01 524 0139



Volunteering: 01 524 0128



Email: supportercare@mqi.ie



Website: www.mqi.ie



Facebook: Merchants Quay Ireland



Twitter: @MerchantsQuayIR

At MQI we respect everyone who turns to us for help – and many are just beginning their fresh start in life. So while client stories are genuine and true, names are changed and stock photographs of models are used for illustrative purposes and to protect client privacy. Thank you for your understanding.