

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

SUMMER 2021

How your welcome awaits Edward in Riverbank's dining room —

The Mealtime Indoors That Means the World

There's excitement in the air at Riverbank's dining room – a place of hope and community after months of restrictions and loneliness. As we prepare to reopen our food service indoors, Edward talks about how you helped change his life with a hot meal...



"I felt really dirty from sleeping out and my shoes were very bad. So, I came to the door at Riverbank and they welcomed me in."

He has the thin build of a much younger man... it's his weathered face that shows every day of his 62 years. But in his smile lives a flicker of the chap from Tipperary.

"When I came to Dublin I was all alone. To tell you the truth... I was suicidal. I was after burying a child and felt so down from depression and grief. I walked the streets of Dublin, sleeping in parks. I often passed Merchant's Quay but didn't know what it

was, I can't read or write and I'm no scholar."

Finding comfort and companionship

It's your kindness that makes this place... so clients can benefit from the dignity of sitting at the table in Riverbank's dining room. The appreciation of a plate, knife and fork to eat with is easy to understand. But it's in talking together, finding comfort in companionship – these are the

hidden gifts that help to heal.

His grey eyes soften as Edward remembers finding his way to the help you give through Merchants Quay Ireland. "I bless the day I met Mary who works here – I didn't know the name of the place or where it was, but she described it to me. I was begging up in Dame Street and she gave me a coffee and said, 'I haven't seen you here before.' She just started off like that! I said, 'No, Miss.' I was a bit wary of her at first!"

Having everything under one roof at Riverbank wraps your support around people like Edward. "I felt really dirty from sleeping out and my shoes were very bad. So, I came to the door at Riverbank, and they welcomed me in."

Around warm and friendly people

Edward opened up and got help with finding hostel accommodation and overcoming addiction. Unable to read the posters on the walls, staff explained all the services available. The hours he could call in for food, access a shower, or see the nurse or doctor. Sometimes they'd just chat over a cup of tea together.

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AT THE COALFACE

Four Questions With Crisis Contact Worker Martin



When homeless clients arrive at Riverbank's door in crisis, the first to meet them are MQI's Crisis Contact team. Staff like Martin build clients' trust by quickly working to ease any shame they might have about being in need. The relief you bring helps those in crisis towards a fresh start...

What's your role when people come to Riverbank for the first time?

It's really important to give full attention to each person in front of you, to really listen to them. Somebody might be freezing cold, so I'd ask if they'd like a hot shower. Once they are warm and comfortable, they are more likely to open up and share their problems. Someone might arrive crying and not having eaten all day, so we'd sit down together over food. If a person is limping in pain, I'll arrange for the nurse to attend to the client before we have a cup of tea and I can listen to what else I can help with. It could be housing, applying for a medical card, a hospital appointment, getting a bed for the night, even help getting home to their place of origin.

Can you tell us about somebody you've worked with recently?

In March, a 26-year-old woman came to the door in distress. We sat down over a cup of tea while she told me how life had fallen

apart. Her employer had closed, she'd lost her shared accommodation and run out of places to couch-surf. Staying in hostels wasn't suitable for her and she'd become desperate. We worked together to fast-track her application for the Homeless Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and found her a flat. With the support she received here at MQI, the client was able to progress swiftly out of homelessness and move on with her life.

How long does it take to get people back on track again?

Every situation is uniquely complex, sometimes working with people over several months. One man in his 40's needed a range of supports for over a year. He was in addiction and sleeping rough. His health deteriorated so badly that he became eligible for supported accommodation. The process was lengthy because it can be difficult to access these units. But with his medical records, we got his application over the line.

He's passed away since but it's consoling that, because of MQI and everyone who supports this work, at least this client knew the security and comfort of having his own home for the last four years of his life.

What would you like to say to MQI supporters directly?

Life is very hard out there, people are hurting. But when you support MQI's work you're helping people out of homelessness and despair. Thanks to you, clients have access to much needed services – someone to listen and support them around their many needs – housing, health care, mental health support, stabilisation and recovery. That's the bottom line. I am eternally grateful for your kindness.

From the whole team, everyone working at the frontline of homelessness, thank you for standing with us, for being a friend and a lifeline. ■

More Than a Cup of Tea

It is our great privilege, at any time, to show you precisely how your donations are used:

A Month in the Life of Your Gift

In an average month's span at Merchants Quay Ireland, your kind donation joins with that of other supporters to provide **mercies big and small** for Ireland's most vulnerable. Your generosity makes a difference in many ways, such as:



Almost 4,000 Warm Welcomes
Every month your donations fund almost 4,000 welcomes for vulnerable men and women who come to our door for relief and comfort, many for the first time.



Meals for a Multitude
Thanks to support like yours, over 4,000 nutritious meals are served monthly at MQI to almost 2,000 people who might otherwise have gone hungry.



Over 800 Crisis Interventions
Thanks to your generosity, over 800 vital interventions take place monthly, providing vulnerable clients with financial support, housing and healthcare.



Fresh Starts for More than a Dozen
Each month on average, 13 people begin new lives after completing MQI's drug-free residential and day programmes. It's down to good people like you that they can.



Hope for 128 living on our streets
Last month, your kindness supported 128 rough sleepers. This summer, thanks to you, MQI's Assertive Outreach team are delivering special summer care kits to the worn and weary.

Knowing We'll Do What's Right

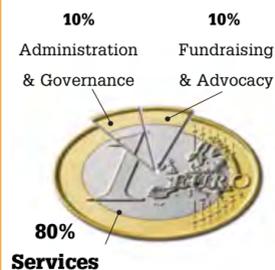
At a time when uncertainties abound, you can have full confidence that Merchants Quay **voluntarily and consistently** hold ourselves to the highest standards of charity governance:

- NO** paid board members (all members are proud to be 100% voluntary)
- Triple Lock** status certified by Charities Institute Ireland (CII)
- CII Finance Team of the Year** for two years running
- NO** related officers, directors, or trustees
- ALL** annual accounts are independently audited and available online 24/7

Also Know: MQI were among the first signatories of Ireland's Code of Good Governance, and remain so today. For any charity you support, never be afraid to ask questions. At Merchants Quay, you can **ring Georgina or James on 01 524 0139**. See our financials on **www.mqi.ie/governance**, or request a copy any time.

Funding Vital Services

Of every Euro we spend, 80 percent goes directly to serve our clients, including detox & rehab, meals, aftercare, counselling, basic medical care and more.



Three Lives You Touch Through Your Kindness

Your support and care wraps around every person who comes to Riverbank. Staff work to build relationships, each at the client's own pace. So when a client feels secure enough to share their troubles, the trust is already there...

Anto

I first came to Merchants Quay Ireland when I was sleeping rough. I started to



look after myself a lot better and managed to get a flat. During the pandemic I got into trouble with my tenancy, so I'm coming to Riverbank now to try to sort that out. I don't want to go back to hostels again. I come in to have a chat about it and get a bit of food. I have anxiety about it because I have a kid and I'm a good father. I want us to have a decent place to see each other. ■

Linda

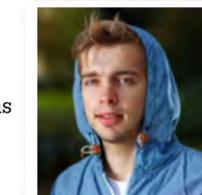
I had a bad infection in my leg and it was sore and bleeding. I came here and the



nurse, Marguerite, tied a bandage around it and then they brought me to St. James's. I had an emergency operation that evening and one of the MQI staff was with me through the whole lot of it. When I came out of the anaesthetic, to see her still there by the bed, it was the whole wide world to me. When I wanted to go outside for some fresh air, she got me a wheelchair and stayed with me the whole time. ■

Daniel

I first became homeless when I was 13. After that I was taken into



care. I started coming to MQI when I was 18 and I'm lucky to have a great key worker to talk to. One of my first times here, I was leaving Riverbank after having food and she called after me, "See you, D!" I was amazed that she remembered my name. But she didn't shout it out, just in case I didn't want everybody knowing my name. I was so happy to be recognized though, it made my day. ■



For each **kind** word,
For every **listening** ear,
For each **brave** smile,
For every **story** shared,
Thank you again for being part of their MQI family.

Thank you!

Until They Have an Address of Their Own: Help Spread the Word

Unless you've requested otherwise, included with this newsletter you will find a summer tradition – our gift of MQI address labels. We print them right here and they only cost around 7c per sheet. So if ever you'd like more, even if you've chosen not to receive them in the

past, please ask. Until every homeless person has an address of their own, you help spread the word by using the labels.

Ring Maggie on 01 524 0139 to request more anytime. Thank you! ■





From the Postbag of MQI: Our Heartfelt Responses to your Heartfelt Messages

Thank you, our MQI family, for your letters, cards and notes sending kind wishes, prayers and thoughts. You're so much a part of this work and it's our delight to read each and every letter. Below are but a few – thank you with all our hearts...

🦋 To E.K. who wrote:

"I was very inspired and moved by reading about the women-only group who started a 6-week detox together at St. Francis Farm. Please pass along my very best wishes to all."

Dear E.K.,

Thank you for your kindhearted words. The group found it easier to explore their underlying trauma in a female-only setting. I'm delighted to say that the journey of recovery is continuing, and each woman is drawing on the support of her peers.

🦋 To S.C. who wrote:

"I'm enclosing my story for the MQI Book of Love. I was a bit uncertain what to write, it's just a few things I've learned along the way. But if it helps even one client who reads it, I'll be delighted."

Dear S.C.,

It means so much that you've taken the time to share your experiences. Thank you! I've no doubt clients will find great encouragement in all the stories that are still coming in. We aim to have the first volume in clients' hands this autumn. (Please contact Emma Murphy at 01 524 0965 if you'd like to write your page in the MQI Book of Love.)



Paula loves reading and responding to your letters and queries. Thank you always for keeping in touch with MQI.

🦋 To K.K. who asked:

"Before the pandemic, MQI invited me to tours of Riverbank and open days at St. Francis Farm and High Park. It was amazing to see all the facilities and meet the staff. Will you be doing that again?"

Dear K.K.,

Definitely! There's nothing like seeing first-hand what your donations are used for. We're looking forward to meeting and seeing you again at those special events. During restrictions it's been difficult having visitors on site. But as soon as we can, we'll be delighted to invite you back to see the work you make possible.

🦋 To L.M. who wrote:

"I did a 5k run to raise funds for MQI in memory of my younger sister. We lost her to addiction in 2016. I just wanted to say participating helped me so much. Could the money be put towards recovery services?"

Dear L.M.,

It's such a deep honour that you chose MQI as the place to remember your dear sister. Thank you. Sometimes all we can do is try to create something meaningful from our grief. We're grateful to use your gift for recovery services – I hope this brings even a small measure of comfort. Thank you very much for your kindness and take good care. ■

KEEP YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS COMING:

Use the reply envelope enclosed to write to us any time – no gift required. You can also ring or email, on 01 524 0139 or to supportercare@mqi.ie. We'll reply as quickly as we can. You are the heart and soul of this good work, and it is our great joy to hear from you.



"To send a letter is a good way to go somewhere without moving anything but your heart"

A Mealtime Indoors...

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“They helped me straighten my life out. They helped me get off drugs. They helped me with depression and my medication. All my teeth were missing, and I saw the dentist.” Edward got to know and trust everyone. He missed that most during lockdown.

“I have such a void in me some days, I can’t describe how it feels to come inside. To be warm, among friendly people who aren’t

prejudiced in any way. I’d meet other people in the same situation as well. There are a lot of good people in Riverbank.”

Running his hands through silver-grey hair, Edward’s voice lowers, “When the virus came, it all felt completely different. Not being able to talk to anybody. We can’t speak the same on the streets. You feel more comfortable indoors, I miss it rotten.”

A brighter future, thanks to you
Edward is very vulnerable, but thanks to you he has somewhere he feels safe. “Things are looking up for me. Through the work with

Mary and the local authority, I have my own place now. Only for the help I got here, I’d be gone long ago. When you’re homeless, a place to go where you’re welcome is needed. It’s desperately needed.”

He parts with a smile, “I have great faith. When I go into the chapel, I light a candle for everyone who ever helped Merchant’s Quay. I hope they know their kindness saves lives, they saved mine.”

Thank you for being there as we prepare to reopen MQI’s dining room with a warm welcome. Thank you for the hope you bring every day. ■



A Simple Summer Wish List For Comfort and Relief

An Irish summer can bring wind, sun and rain in the same day. So, at MQI we have to be prepared for all weather conditions. While we have a good stock of donated clothing at the moment, clients always need the basics:



- New, packaged men’s underwear (boxers and briefs) size medium
- New, packaged women’s underwear (including sports bras) size medium
- New, packaged socks for men and women
- Sunscreen and baseball hats to protect against burning



Please ring Emma on 01 524 0965 if you have any of these items to donate.

Big Wish – A very special generous gift of €3,000 for air filtration units to purify and make sure there’s clean air-circulation in Riverbank. Keeping our clients and staff safe is vital and with more people coming indoors, it’s important to keep clean air circulating throughout the building. Air filtration units in areas that are hard to ventilate will help make sure people stay well.



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

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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.