

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

A Message for 2021, by CEO Paula Byrne —

In a Year Like No Other, You Kept Hope Alight

Would any of us have believed it, had we known 12 months ago what lay ahead? The huge changes we'd all have to make. Just to keep going and be safe. When everything Merchants Quay Ireland stands for was thrown into turmoil, your kindness shone through. When clients needed help more than ever, you stayed the course with them. You kept the flame of hope alight at MQI...

It has to be the cruelest thing about Covid – that it thrives on everything wonderful about being human. It struck at the very core of Merchants Quay's ethos – our welcome at the door. Warm smiles. A comforting touch on the shoulder. A friendly chat over a hot cup of tea. In March last year it felt like every day we had to adjust.

You helped us find whole new ways of reaching out with support and love to people who had nothing and nobody.

Many new people became homeless since the pandemic hit our shores. Some were in emergency accommodation for the first time, fearful of where they found themselves. Others decided to take their chances sleeping rough on the deserted streets. Anxious and desperate, they wondered why there were so



few services open. HSE guidance meant the number of clients we could safely have in our Riverbank building was severely reduced. But you made sure we could still provide vital healthcare and offer hot, nourishing take-away meals twice a day.

Your commitment helped us adapt our services – bringing the heart of MQI out onto the streets. You helped expand MQI's Assertive Outreach team so that help could be brought to people

100% Funded... By You

The following programmes, projects and services for people in dire need were 100% funded by you in 2020 – thank you!

- **Expansion of our Assertive Outreach team**, who provide essential basic supplies to those sleeping rough during COVID-19. In 2020, your compassion reached 617 women and men living on the streets.
- **Safeguarding an additional nursing role for the next three years**. In 2020, your kindness allowed 686 people to receive vital healthcare from MQI's nursing team.
- **Refurbishment of 10 bedrooms at St Francis Farm**, providing a homely and welcoming environment for our rehab and detox clients as they build new lives. Last year, 100 people finished treatment and started their drug-free lives, thanks to you.

where they lie. Out on the streets first thing in the morning, the team carry backpacks full of basic supplies like food, water, hats, gloves, wipes, and hand sanitizer.

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Hope Kept Alight....

Searching the streets, alleys and parks. Checking that people who'd spent the night in a doorway or on the pavement, had something to eat and drink. And when they needed somebody to talk to, your generosity made it happen. For people afraid and lonely on the streets, falling into despair, you made sure they had a lifeline. Your gift of kindness found the way through, so clients knew they weren't forgotten.

You helped fund an additional nursing role. Every day saw people's health deteriorating – in body and mind – urgently needing care. Through your generosity, MQI was able to tend to their wounds, heal their sickness and soothe their spirits.

For the brave men and women who were already fighting to reclaim their drug-free lives, MQI's rehabilitation and detox centres remained open. Clients and staff pulled together to keep each other safe. For a while there were no visitors, and holistic therapies, workshops and training had to be paused. But computers and technology kept family contact possible, so relationships could be given a chance to heal.

When the need was greatest, you were there with us. We have the honour of doing all this work in your name. Thank you. Thank you for the amazing gift of hope you give. Every day of the year. You are our light. ■

Winter WISH LIST



Emma Murphy, MQI's donor relations manager

A wish in itself is a simple thing, pure of the heart for the hope it will bring. As the cold and dark weather continues, your gifts will brighten the most difficult days. If you find yourself with extra to spare, the following items would make a massive difference to a man or woman facing life on the streets:

- ✓ New, packaged underwear for both women and men
- ✓ New packaged socks, hats, scarves, and gloves
- ✓ Toiletries of all kinds: shampoo, shower gel, shaving gear, toothbrushes, and toothpaste
- ✓ BIG WISH! €1,600 for a new electrical medical bed. An extra bed means our staff can bring relief to more rough sleepers, who often suffer untreated infections and chronic health conditions.



To keep everybody safe and well please abide by the latest travel advice. At the time of going to print our fundraising team are working from home and the office is closed. So - please do not travel to our office to drop in your Winter Wish List donations.

Instead, we would be very grateful to receive a donation over the phone towards these items. Or you could hold these items until it's safe to pop into us. **Call Emma on 01 524 0965** at any stage and we can discuss the best option. ■

Thank you, and stay safe!

In their own words, MQI staff and clients say thank you:



Darren, Project Worker

"MQI is a life-saving service. It's the variety of things that they have here; a doctor, nurse, mental health team. I can't thank the donors enough. Their kindness means so much to people. If it wasn't for them, Merchant's Quay wouldn't be open."

– Noel, Riverbank homeless centre client



Elizabeth, Donor Care

"One day I was feeling very down, and I didn't tell anyone. But Sheena, the mental health nurse, knew straight away that I was feeling low, without me saying anything. It's amazing the way they care and go out of their way for you."

– Anne, mental health client



Ken, Aftercare Manager

"I couldn't imagine being in a more suitable environment during the lockdown. Being around other people who are in the same boat as me makes this much easier. The group are all so supportive of each other. That keeps me focused on the reasons I came here in the first place."

– Dan, aftercare client



Lourdes, Community Engagement Worker

"High Park has given me the tools to cope with a lot of emotional damage, and to help change a lot of behaviours that were so ingrained in me. For the first time in years I was actually seen and listened to. I was given the space and a safe environment to help me explore."

– Glen, former High Park client



Mark, Head of Recovery Services

"I'm on my feet all day, trying to keep warm and occupied. It's hard when there's no one around, it's like a ghost town. Everybody keeps saying that, don't they? Well, I'll tell you, we're the ghosts. Thankfully, I've still been able to get some food and medical care. MQI have been a lifesaver, literally."

– Stephen, outreach client



Ryan, Outreach Project Worker



Declan, MQI Volunteer

Thank you for your grace and generosity in 2020. Today, someone is alive because you cared.

Greg and Amy, Outreach project workers

With gratitude and love for all you do this year and every year, from your MQI family.

Battling Homelessness and Addiction: David's Story in His Own Words

2021 will be a better year for all of us. David knows this more than anyone. While Ireland was in lockdown – David was in recovery at MQI's St. Francis Farm Rehabilitation Centre in Co. Carlow. With your support he has reclaimed his drug-free life and is rebuilding relationships with his family. Today he embraces the future, knowing in his heart that he deserves to be happy. Here, in his own words, David shares his journey with you, his MQI family...



“The main thing with me is sorting out my mental health, just accepting myself for who I am... It's like I've just been reborn.” David, MQI client

I had cancer twice in my twenties. I was used to being healthy and strong, so finding out I wasn't, it was a shock and it knocked me sideways. I got very sick like, I went down to under five stone and was in hospital for months.

I know I'm not the only one, lots of people have to go through it, but I really struggled. The cancer destroyed my body and my confidence. My mental health suffered the most, and I suppose I started using drugs to cope with this.

“Things just spiralled out of control”

I managed for the first couple of years. I had my own place, I was working. I had money saved up for a deposit on a house. And then things just spiralled out of control. It got bad very quickly. I lost people around me, my job and my girlfriend. All those things vanished.

I was in my early thirties when I first became homeless. It's very hard out there. I spent a couple of years staying in hostels. I slept in doorways all

around Dublin's city centre. Twice I woke up and a person was dead beside me.

I was going out of my head and taking drugs just to survive on the streets. I wanted to get help years ago but when you're in addiction, you just can't reach out and grab it. I couldn't even talk to anyone about it, that's how alone I felt.

Merchants Quay Ireland was a lifeline. Being able to come to Riverbank for a shower and something to eat kept me together. And the help I got there from the staff, the support they gave me when I needed it most... that's what kept me holding on I suppose.

I got septicaemia in my foot. It seemed like I just woke up with it one morning, but the injury itself had happened about a month before. I was taken to hospital and while I was there, I got onto methadone. From there I was able to get into detox at MQI's St. Francis Farm.

As soon as I arrived at St. Francis Farm, I felt safe. I felt



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people understood me. The staff can relate to how people's problems start. It's like unravelling a knot.

“It's like I've just been reborn”

The main thing with me is sorting out my mental health, just accepting myself for who I am. I got a lot of stuff out during the one-to-one counselling. Being off drugs in rehab and doing all this work, it's like I've just been reborn.

I'm still learning to manage obviously. People see that I'm trying to help myself, and I'm rebuilding relationships with my family in the last couple of months. Being in St. Francis Farm has opened my eyes. Deep down, I'm still afraid of the future, but I'm beginning to see life is worth living and I want to make it a nice life.

I made the choice to go to St. Francis Farm because I had

to. I was definitely on my last life out there. If it wasn't for Merchants Quay and the kind donors who support them, more than likely I'd be in ground. That's the truth of it. I definitely don't want to go back to living on the streets.

Your kind support of MQI ensures we can continue to be a lifeline to men and women just like David. Thank you. ■



Merchants Quay Ireland
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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.