A Night at the Night Café

On a frozen night in early January 2015, amazing supporters like you helped us take a leap of faith and bring MQI’s Night Café into existence. It was, and still is, the only service of its kind in Ireland for people who are homeless that have completely fallen off society’s radar, with nowhere left to go. There were no guarantees, and only the most limited, provisional State funding: your generosity and compassion did all the rest.

Five years on the Night Café still shines its beacon of hope to men and women who are the most fragile of all, literally left to the streets in the loneliest, wee hours, if not for you. On this night, we open the Night Café’s door for you, and welcome you inside this place of comfort, respect, and safety that your love makes real...

As shadows fall and the reflections of street lights begin to twinkle across the River Liffey, the dedicated staff of MQI’s Night Café gather behind closed doors to start their “day” – a 10-hour overnight shift that will link them in with some of the most vulnerable women and men in all of Ireland.

And in describing the Night Café, the client we’ll call Donal said, “Imagine you’ve been out there all day. You want to lay down. But you can’t because there’s a street, or a park, and you’re not allowed. You’re tired, you’re hungry, and you have no money. No one to call. Nowhere to go. This place allows you to lay down. To sleep. It allows you to eat, to have a shower, to rest. The Night Café lets you forget the things of today and dream of something better tomorrow...”

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A Night at the Night Café: How you bring comfort to fragile lives in the hardest hours of all...

As MQI’s Extended Day Service closes for another evening, Night Café staff arrive at Riverbank. It’s empty and quiet for this brief window; reserved for tending to the over-nighting men, rolling out the sleeping mats, unpacking meals, and taking stock of essential supplies stowed outside the showers. Tonight there are no noise, tumultuousness or too much talk, and the supply of men’s underwear is nearly gone. Later, when clients come in, they are exhausted as they check in, but not pushing. Their faces are exhausted, but not empty. Their eyes seem so weary. In the background, other staff roll up the mats and move tables back into position as cereal, toast, jam and coffee are set out while the rest of the staff work behind the counter for a hot meal. It’s quiet and intimate, warm and filling, and staff call clients by their names and greet each person with a smile. Many of the sleeping men are rolled out as people continue to fall in.

9:00pm to 10:59pm: The ‘Breakfast’ begins
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Everybody from the day and extended day staff pass on information to us, like John has a hospital appointment tomorrow. ‘Let me know if there’s anything I can help with, mate’ he says. ‘All the donations we get, the food and the items from my heart, it’s really, really appreciated by our clients.’

As the first rays of light appear, a host of other workers emerge. Staff wake the rest with a kind hand on their shoulders and a friendly ‘good morning’. Some clients in particular pull themselves up slowly, rubbing eyes and yawning. Some claim they’ve seen a dream. We’re just normal people trying to sort out our lives. I always try to come here because the staff are really nice. It’s safe."

6:00am to 7:00am: Wake the rest with a kind hand on the shoulder
As the first rays of light appear, a host of other workers emerge. Staff wake the rest with a kind hand on their shoulders and a friendly ‘good morning’. Some clients in particular pull themselves up slowly, rubbing eyes and yawning. Some claim they’ve seen a dream. We’re just normal people trying to sort out our lives. I always try to come here because the staff are really nice. It’s safe."

7:00am: The Night Café re-emerges onto the streets
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continuum of care
Mark, a project worker, is proud of the new-24 hour service you have created for vulnerable clients. “At Night Café staff arrive at Riverbank. It’s empty and quiet for this brief window, reserved for tending to the over-nighting men, rolling out the sleeping mats, unpacking meals, and taking stock of essential supplies stowed outside the showers. Tonight there are no noise, tumultuousness or too much talk, and the supply of men’s underwear is nearly gone. Later, when clients come in, they are exhausted as they check in, but not pushing. Their faces are exhausted, but not empty. Their eyes seem so weary. In the background, other staff roll up the mats and move tables back into position as cereal, toast, jam and coffee are set out while the rest of the staff work behind the counter for a hot meal. It’s quiet and intimate, warm and filling, and staff call clients by their names and greet each person with a smile. Many of the sleeping men are rolled out as people continue to fall in."

200am: the gift of hot water
In the back room, the sound of running water and soap releases a comforting aroma. A warm cup of tea is passed on to clients. Tonight one shower is closed for repair, reminding everyone what you provide in finding something as precious as hot water: the showers are in continuous use through the wee hours. Each person emerges visibly more themselves - warm and clean, a gift of dignity.

worse for women
Over ten thousand people in Ireland now homeless, the Night Café serves more and more women. Lorraine is glad to come through the door. “It’s bad out there for women. There’s violence. It took me ages to get up the courage to come here, you expect it to be scary. But it’s not like that at all. We’re just normal people trying to sort out our lives. I always try to come here because the staff are really nice. It’s safe.”

5:00am: the gift of food
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Moments of mercy
It is half twelve when a new client opens the door. He is polite and soft-spoken despite a bad limp from walking the streets all day. After he gets a hot shower, a staff member asks how he will pay for rest will continue until they can move enough to afford the ever-ascending cost of rent. This means that even when the homeless drift off to sleep, they remain ready, wakening among the men and women. One older couple requests to sleep beside staff, and their hands still touch in slumber, as if for reassurance. A few mat duvets, a giant of a man tosses and turns. It’s a matter of circumstance.

They are granted to staff...

A matter of circumstance
Comer has relied on the Night Café for five weeks. He wants you to know that he is one of the clients, “It’s down to circumstances. Homelessness isn’t just about drug use, or mental health troubles. Sometimes it’s a pay cheque away. I had to pass a test in order to work, but I had a high fever. I failed the test, so they terminated my contract and I was too sick to appeal it. I’ve used all of MQI’s services - the project workers have just helped link me in with another job.”

To watch a short film on the good work you make possible nearly round the clock at MQI, visit w w w .mqi.ie/film-19/ And thank you for the dignity you bring to people who are homeless, hungry, and struggling with addiction in Ireland. We couldn’t help them, without you.

w w w .mqi.ie
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It’s multiplying magic...
Helping the Pets That Heal

Every second Friday at MQI’s Riverbank, one room is reserved for some very special companions to the men and women who are homeless in Ireland – their trusted animal friends. And it’s having an extraordinary knock-on effect...

In 2017, the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (DSPCA) approached MQI with a powerful idea. As the numbers of people on Ireland’s streets continued to climb, they wondered: could they host a biweekly clinic at MQI offering free drop-in veterinary care for the beloved pets of those men and women with no homes? Alan Dooley, who was head of day services at Riverbank at the time, jumped at the chance. “It’s a well-known fact the therapeutic impact that pets have on us,” he said, of the sense of security, love, and connection pets provide. “People’s existence on the streets can be quite bleak, not knowing from one night to another where they’ll be sleeping. The impact of a pet coming in is remarkable.”

The clinic has been a success ever since – with a surprising knock-on effect. Alan, who is now in his twenty-third year with MQI, explains. “We’re trying to break down the barriers that keep people from coming to us. Not only do the pets get care at the clinic, it lets us link in with people that we haven’t had the opportunity to before, and with their consent, allow them to avail of the many services we have on offer here at Merchants Quay Ireland.” Pauline, who has been the DSPCA clinic’s vet nurse since the start in 2017, added that pets come to her having been really well looked after. Today she receives a visit from Ken and Buddy*, a gentle beagle wearing a clean, bright, reflective collar who is there for a check-up. “He’s my best pal,” said Ken, “I’d be lost without him. It’s a great service.”

Thank you to the DSPCA for this wonderful free service, and thank you to you, for giving people who are homeless a place to turn – those with animal friends, and those without.

A Christmas Gratitude Concert That’s Especially for You

The Dublin Concert Band will return once again for MQI’s annual Christmas Gratitude Concert and carol singing, in honour of the great good you do to transform the lives of vulnerable people right here at home.

When: Sunday, 15th December, from 3.30 to 5pm
Where: Adam & Eve Church, 4 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8 (opposite the Four Courts)
RSVP: To join us for this uplifting event, reserve your free places with Emma by Friday, 13th December, on 01 524 0965 or emma.murphy@mqi.ie. Include as many of your nearest and dearest as you like!

For the helping hand you extend to good people in dire need all year, our Christmas songs will be for you. Thank you, from the heart, and we hope to see you there.

www.mqi.ie
Give Your Birthday to Those in Need

Did you know that – simply by pledging your next birthday on Facebook – you can request donations instead of presents, to help people who are homeless and hungry in Ireland?

It’s easy. Just go to www.facebook.com/MerchantsQuayIR and click ‘Create Fundraiser.’ There you can set a fundraising goal, track your progress, and share your fundraiser with friends and family via email or social media. They can donate securely with just a few clicks!

What’s more, Facebook Fundraisers are free – and MQI receives 100% of the birthday money you raise, to give people a fresh start here at home. Want to pledge a different special occasion? You can do that as well.

For more details, we’re here to help: Ring us anytime on 01 524 0139 or email to supportercare@mqi.ie. Here’s to the most meaningful birthdays of all!

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

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.

Where Even the Smallest Autumn Wishes Work Wonders

In a bit of sad news, the loss of the storage room at our Riverbank homeless centre has left us storing extra items wherever we can – so this autumn’s Wish List is limited to the most essential, highest priority necessities. If you can donate any of these barebones basics, please know they will go to immediate use for a person in need who will be thankful for the dignity and comfort you give...

✔️ 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
✔️ Clean bath towels, new or used

Give your items in person to MQI at 24 Merchants Court, 9:30am to 5pm, Monday to Thursday, to 4:30pm on Friday. Or if you’re in Dublin and can’t come to us, ring Emma on 01 524 0965.

We’ll call to collect your donated items in the New Year, and bring the MQI photo album. And thank you for every autumn wish you make come true.

Thank you!

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