

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

Meals for a Multitude: The Chef Who Feeds Ireland's Most Vulnerable, Thanks to You

In the heart of MQI's Riverbank centre, this chef and his team will serve more than two thousand hand-prepared, nutritious meals week on week. Yet the only payment his clients can afford is their thanks. Chef Dave takes you behind the scenes of the extraordinary food service your donations make possible for people who are homeless and hungry...



"Our supporters give up their hard earned cash to help get food in someone's belly...my way of saying thank you is to cook to the best of my ability," says Riverbank's devoted longtime chef, Dave.

His grocery list is like nothing you've seen. Thirty kilos of minced beef. Twenty five kilos of potatoes. Another twenty five kilos of vegetables. Bread for several hundred sandwiches. To have enough food on hand for those who rely on him, it's a process he

will repeat each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, every week. This is the scope of the food service you support every time you help fund meals at MQI, and Chef Dave wants you to know how grateful he is.

Gift of survival

"I see the number of meals served here," he nods, "and I'd be astonished myself. I have great pride in what we put out and how clients react to us. Our supporters give up their hard earned cash to help get food in someone's belly – so that person can survive another week, and to hopefully one day get out of their struggles. My way of saying thank you is to cook to the best of my ability."

Together with his dedicated team of staff and volunteers, Chef

Dave fully understands the gravity of the work. "Some of our homeless clients come in from the cold and they haven't eaten in days. We use fresh food, never frozen, because it's high in protein, high in nutrients, and high in starch. Thanks to our donors, clients get a hot meal every night the likes of chili and rice, stews, coddles, shepherd's pie. It wouldn't be fancy stuff. But being cold on the streets they need homely cooking inside them."

Making the most of resources

At a homeless centre that is open nearly 24/7, meal service starts as early as 6.30am, continues through the wee hours of sandwiches at the Night Café, and even includes a Sunday meal service Chef Dave hopes to expand in the new year.

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**For your grace and generosity
in 2018, a very special MQI
thank you to... YOU!
See inside ➡➡**

When everything seemed lost, your support was there to light the way. Thank you for every fresh start...

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



Paula Byrne, CEO

"I'd just like to say to supporters that if they weren't there, I don't know where I'd be. They gave me back my spirit and my life back on track. There really is a way out of homelessness and addiction."

— James, former MQI client, now with his own small business



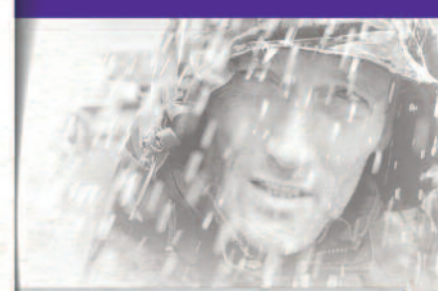
William, Project Worker, Night Café

"Without MQI aftercare housing to help with the transition when you come out of treatment and are trying to stay drug free, a lot of people end up back using – and some of them don't make it."

Aftercare meant the world to me because I'm still drug free, I'm here today, and it works."
— Peter, former St. Francis Farm and Aftercare client



Mags, Day Services, Riverbank



Abdul, Day Services, Riverbank

"I've slept in old cars in scrap yards, in the snow, there is nothing worse than feeling alone. The mental health team are helping me quite a lot. It doesn't matter who you are, or where you've been, they're there for you."

— Des, Riverbank homeless centre client



John, Project Worker, St. Francis Farm



Jenny, Case Worker & Amy, Project Worker, Riverbank

"If I get back into another 24-hour access place, I can work again. I've just recently done the forklift course. I'm a lot stronger than I was, and that's down to the work and the support I get from here."

— Eoin, Riverbank homeless centre client

(L-R)
Jennifer, Project Worker, Riverbank
Darren, Facilities Lead, Riverbank
Therese, Project Worker, Riverbank



"If not for Merchants Quay, there wouldn't be anywhere to go. No food, nowhere to shower, there aren't any beds. MQI always has an open door, they give you fresh clothing, and socks, everything you need. And there's always a hot meal."

— Martha, Riverbank homeless centre client



Annette, Operational & Clinical Co-Coordinator, St. Francis Farm

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

Hope is here, because of you.



Meals for a Multitude...

(continued from cover)

He uses a mix of suppliers and the unique services of another charity called Food Cloud, so that no one goes hungry. "Our budget is tight, so I use Food Cloud to access and supplement our shopping budget with free food. It's a charity that collects and shares food to places like MOI – food that stores can no longer sell, but that is still good. We put it to use. By incorporating it into our menus, the food never goes to waste, and it extends our resources."

All for people like Séan

Feeding people who are hungry and homeless on a budget that is often stretched may seem like a

How to Be a Community Chef for the Day —

Could Your Business Give a Day to Chef Dave and His Team?

Volunteer your company to join Chef Dave's team for a day, and your employees will get back many times more from helping to prep and serve meals to clients at MOI. "When you hand someone a hot meal who hasn't eaten for three days, and you see the delight on their face, I think that's the key – to see the benefits of giving something back to people that are in need." For details on how your company can be part of MOI's Community Chef for the Day, contact **Emma** on **01 524 0965** or **Emma.Murphy@mqi.ie**

tall order. But for Chef Dave and his team, who he readily says he'd "be lost without," it's all for people like Séan. "There's an elderly man I'll call Séan, he comes in for breakfast every day. He had a stroke recently, and we'd all been

really concerned for him. That first day he came back he thanked me very much for breakfast. I can't ever say thank you enough to donors for helping people like him. Every donation I get goes back out to our clients." ■

Please say you'll join us!

You're Invited: 2019's First Donor Tours of Riverbank

Reserve your place today for 2019's first donor tours of the haven of hope you make real, MOI's Riverbank homeless centre in Dublin. The centre will be closed and quiet for a few hours on these days, and dedicated staff like Chef Dave, CEO Paula Byrne, and many others will be on hand as your personal tour guides. If Thursday doesn't suit, we've added a special Saturday tour to make it easier for you to attend...

When: Thurs 14th Feb, starting 10.30am
Sat 16th Feb, starting 11.00am
Where: MOI's Riverbank Centre,
24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8
RSVP: to Emma on 01 524 0965 or
Emma.Murphy@mqi.ie

We look forward to seeing you there. Thank you!



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

Merchants Quay Ireland
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:** supporter@mqi.ie
- Website:** www.mqi.ie
- Facebook:** Merchants Quay Ireland
- Twitter:** @MerchantsQuayIR

At MOI 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.

Ending the Silence & Stigma:

Part 1 - Old Before Their Time

Dr. Cliona Ní Cheallaigh's statistics reveal a sad, seldom discussed truth. Where there should be data in her chart for people aged 60 to 70 who are homeless, only a blank space appears. Most were gone by then. In Part 1 of MQI's "Ending the Silence and Stigma" series, discover what is literally stealing decades of life from people on the streets, and the Dublin homeless inclusion health programme that's among the first of its kind in the world...



The client known as "Jonny"* gasps for breath that doesn't come. His lips are blue. His blood oxygen levels are falling. He's gone into acute failure for a respiratory condition that is easily treatable in modern-day Ireland. But Jonny is homeless. Although not yet 40, if he survives the day, a cascade of events are already in motion that will make him old before his time. Experts are now acknowledging a premature ageing of 20 to 30 years among people who are homeless — *with or without addiction* — driving conditions commonly associated with old age such as vascular

disease, hypertension, and cognitive decline. And it's making it that much harder for them to come back.

In 2016 a pilot project led by St. James Hospital consultant Dr. Cliona Ní Cheallaigh began linking with charities like Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) and other community partners to make sure homeless patients like Jonny wouldn't fall off the radar and grow old, or die, before their time. What she and others discovered reveals volumes about the damaging effects of homelessness. "One of the things that struck me was that many of the homeless people I saw were my age, but they would look really old," Cliona begins. "So we started looking at the age profile. For our hospital inpatients, the median age

was 70. But if they were homeless, it was someone in their early 40s. By the time they'd be hitting their 60s and 70s, many were dead. They'd been through more in the same number of years, and had the diseases associated with old age." Through her own research and work done by others, the causes — and a possible solution — emerged.

How homelessness hurts: the new view

On any given day, someone who is homeless like Jonny endures everything from constant exposure to the wet and the cold, to inadequate clothing, poor nutrition, and an inability to access private toilets and showers. If he is like many who sleep rough, this unrelenting

Hidden Effects of Homelessness

Studies^{1,2,3} of people who were homeless and aged 45-50+ showed:

- Grip strength equivalent to a 65-year-old
- Only half the functional mobility of someone 65 and older
- Nearly one out of three described as frail
- More than one out of three reported falling in the previous six months
- High rates of diabetes, depression, hypertension, stroke, and seizures

Sources:

¹"Premature ageing in the Homeless Population," Depaul Health Initiative February 2018.

²"Boston's elderly homeless sicker than others, research finds," Science Daily, 13/9/2011.

³"Geriatric Conditions in a Population-Based Sample of Older Homeless Adults," The Gerontologist, August 2017.

Old Before Their Time, *continued*

stress comes on the heels of things like childhood trauma, violence, poverty, and abuse. Worldwide, study after study shows people who are homeless have higher rates of mortality, disease, and hospitalisation. Sometimes – *but not always* – compounded by addiction to drugs or alcohol, the struggle for survival is fertile ground for the speeded-up ageing process called ‘weathering.’

Scientists have recently found the effects of social stress and shame are also punishing. Cliona explains. “Being in a position where you feel ashamed of who you are, or feeling that you don’t ‘rank’ in society – as homeless people so often tell us they feel – this actually causes chronic inflammation that can accelerate ageing.” Combined with results from a 2018 study by the Depaul Health Initiative showing people who are homeless to be among Ireland’s most isolated, the connection to early ageing is doubly clear.

Coming together for people like Jonny

It’s unsettling to picture anyone on the streets, losing years of their life in a matter of months. The good news is that the inclusion health service is helping people to come back – and if funding continues, it could become a model for the world. Inspired by work in the UK and Boston, Cliona found “it’s a bit like geriatrics. In older people they have multiple chronic health conditions and we need to think about their capacity, and their housing, and are they going to be able to manage. Homeless



“One of the things that still strikes me is that homeless people often look really old. They have the diseases associated with old age, far too young. It’s all the diseases you’d expect in somebody twenty to thirty years older, at a time when they’re most alone. We’ve seen dementia in homeless people in their forties.”

— Dr. Cliona Ní Cheallaigh, Inclusion Health Pilot Clinical Lead and Consultant Physician, St. James Hospital. Thanks to support like yours she heads up team meetings at MQI each week, as one of the world’s first inclusion health services for homeless people

people need that kind of care as well, but at a much younger age.”

To that end, as part of Cliona’s project, Merchants Quay Ireland hosts weekly inclusion health multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings. Mental health nurse Derek is one of MQI’s many staff who take part and often hold first-in-Ireland roles themselves, funded by the donations of people who want new solutions to homelessness and addiction. He describes the joined-up nature of the MDT. “Every service is there from the Mater and St. James hospitals, to several homeless hostels, lots of key staff from numerous agencies, the likes of MQI, Safetynet, Dublin Simon, DCC Healthlink, Depaul, and the Rough Sleepers team. We come together weekly under MQI’s roof to discuss vulnerable clients we are worried about and that may need to go into hospital, or who are coming out and need wraparound supports. It’s down to Cliona’s programme and MQI

donors that we can come together to avoid duplication of efforts, to share, and to get proper help to our homeless people who are in fragile health and sometimes, active addiction.”

A tragic time machine, reset

As MQI’s CEO, I have seen the effectiveness of this new inclusion service – two people who were made homeless last year come to mind. Their faces were freeze-burned, their coughs ragged, shoulders drooping, and physical states so frail. Today it’s a time machine reset: after inclusion healthcare and in accommodation, the man and woman look years younger, like any smiling couple you’d pass on the street. And it’s hard not to feel hope for Jonny. Somehow he made it to us at MQI, and thanks to trusted staff went straight into St. James’s A&E under the care of the inclusion health service and the follow-on care of the MDT. ■