

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

SUMMER 2023

“Dad, I just want you to focus on yourself and get well. We’ll have lots more birthdays.”

Jim’s a very proud dad. You can see his eyes light up when he speaks about his son, Danny. And just like every parent, Jim can’t believe how quickly the years have flown by. His boy is turning 18 this month. He’s now a young man.

“I missed a lot of birthdays,” Jim says quietly in his soft Cork accent. “But we have time, I’ll make up for all of them.”

It’s Jim’s second stay at Merchants Quay Ireland’s St. Francis Farm residential drug-free detox and rehab centre. The 20-week programme consists of six weeks for detox, clearing the body of substances, followed by 14 weeks of intense therapeutic rehabilitation. The programme gives clients the safety and space to examine the issues underpinning their drug use. Problems often rooted in childhood trauma, from growing up in poverty, abuse and chaos.

The scars Jim carries from surviving his childhood run deep into his adult

soul. It’s not that anybody deliberately chooses to become addicted. People really just want to avoid pain and numb their emotions completely. For Jim, addiction led him down a dark path.

Beating addiction takes everything you’ve got.

Here at St. Francis Farm, Jim’s working as hard as he can to embrace his recovery. But beating addiction is hard work that takes everything you’ve got.

Three years ago, Jim didn’t finish the programme. It was a bitter lesson. “I was back on drugs the very day I left. And three years later I was still using drugs every single day. Until I told myself ‘Stop this now. You’re pushing on 40, and you’ve a young fella who needs you.’”

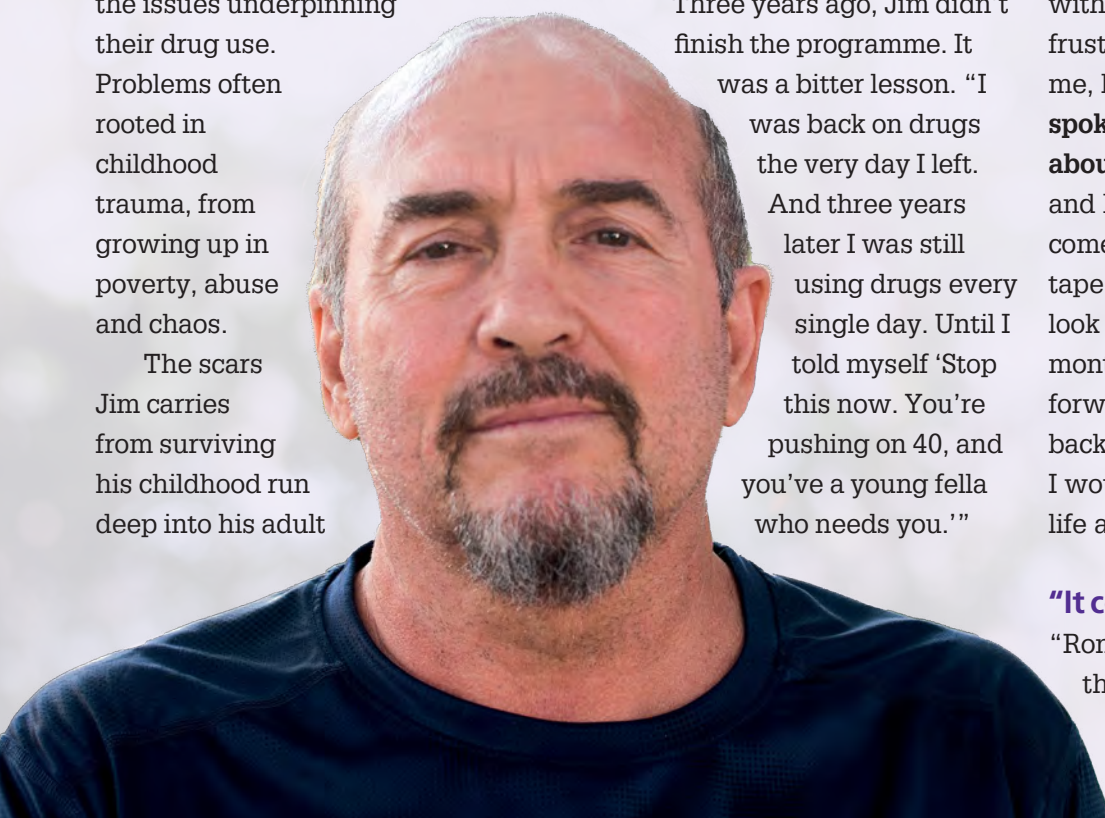
“I want to be the best father I can be.”

Everyone’s life has a turning point. That moment of clarity. When the vision of a new future finally feels real enough to grasp. Jim’s holding on to that vision for dear life. He knows it’s the only way forward, no matter how hard he must fight for his recovery.

Jim’s a solid figure of a man, but he shivers when he talks about how fragile he is. “I was even going to leave again last week,” he tells us with total honesty. “I was frustrated. Things were getting to me, building up in my head. **So, I spoke with my counsellor, Ronan about it.** He told me to sit down and he asked me why all this had come up. Ronan made me ‘play the tape backwards’ which means to look back on where I was a few months ago. And then play the tape forwards, to see that I’d be right back in that drug world, and I wouldn’t have my son in my life anymore.”

“It could have been a disaster.”

“Ronan made me see that keeping things inside my head can lead me to a full-blown relapse. We



Compassion. Dignity. Justice. Equality. Respect. Your kindness lights a candle in every client’s heart.

The values you shine in your support of MQI... with David, at St. Francis Farm:

All along the driveway into St. Francis Farm are beautifully hand-made wooden signs. They're inscribed with words carefully chosen by clients through the years: Compassion, Dignity, Justice, Equality, Respect. Staff member, David, sees these values take root and grow in the hearts of clients during their stay.

“I work on a day-to-day basis farming with the clients,” David explains in his gentle, patient way. “We plant outdoors and in polytunnels, growing our own summer and winter vegetables, fruits, potatoes, herbs and all kinds of flowers too. We keep a couple of cattle and sometimes we may have pigs or

sheep and we always have chickens. Clients get used to the poultry first, feeding the hens, giving them water and fresh straw for their beds. And, of course, there's always great pleasure in collecting the eggs each morning.”

Sharing the work and the rewards.

Looking after the livestock is an act of compassion and respect in David's eyes. “It's a wonderfully beneficial outlet for people who come here. The animals are vulnerable and need to be cared-for, so clients feel safe with them

and build a relationship of responsibility. Likewise, planting seeds, watching them grow and looking after the lettuce, carrots -- all kinds of food. Before long, clients volunteer to water and weed them. It builds a sense of growth within the person when, by the time they are finished the programme, we are sharing the fruits and vegetables at the table.”

David has all the respect in the world for the clients he works with. “Here, we meet people as they are, because they want to be here, and they are giving it their all. Different people have different energy, but

the one thing they share is that they're present here, and they are working very hard. The physical work is a wonderful complement to the very difficult mental and emotional work people have to do in recovery from addiction.”

Your Open Day at St. Francis Farm – MQI's gift to you!

You're very warmly invited to visit St. Francis Farm to meet David and some of the clients at our Open Day on Saturday September 2nd. David remembers how inspiring last year's event was for clients, “I was outside in the gardens chatting to some

supporters who were visiting. With me were two or three of our clients, engaging and telling their own stories to people. I could actually feel myself warming within. I was beaming just looking at the clients there. It was very, very special to see their confidence as well as their sincerity and trust.”

“The Open Day is a wonderful experience for MQI supporters and donors. We are very blessed to be a charity that can reflect back to you the goodness that you do here,” says David.

Please join us at the Farm! And thank you from the heart for shining your love through Merchants Quay Ireland. ■



You're invited!

Please be our guest.

Your warm welcome to St. Francis Farm Supporter Open Day!

You're what makes St. Francis Farm special, so we're delighted to welcome you to visit as our guest of honour in Tullow, Co Carlow.

**Saturday September 2nd
between 11am-2pm.**

A bus will travel to the Farm from Merchants Quay at 10am. Whether you plan to travel on our bus or drive there yourself, spaces are very limited! **RSVP by August 21st to Shauna at 01 524 0139** to reserve your place. ■



People in Homelessness get old before their time and die too young.

On any given day, someone who is homeless spends hours outdoors in all weathers. Enduring everything from extremes of cold, wind and rain to scorching sun. Managing outdoors with inadequate clothing and poor nutrition brings unrelenting stress that grinds down people's health. This comes on the heels of deep-seated problems like childhood trauma, violence, poverty and abuse.



The impact of homelessness on health can knock around 40 years off a person's life expectancy. People in homelessness are much sicker than the general population. Study after study finds untreated chronic illnesses like epilepsy, diabetes, bowel diseases and respiratory illnesses from being out in the weather. Many have asthma and COPD, as well as heart problems, high blood pressure and pulmonary diseases. These conditions, often going unattended for years, cause premature aging.

Almost half of people who are homeless leave A&E before they're seen, even though they're very sick. They often leave because they're ashamed of body odour or how they appear. So, the stigma of homelessness affects people's ability to seek medical help.

Of people living rough, death comes early. Seven out of ten people die alone - in public places, on streets, in derelict buildings or emergency accommodation. And these deaths happen right around Ireland, not just in Dublin.

Saving lives with your support.

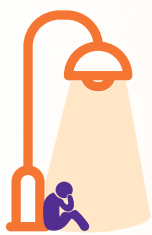
You make sure that MQI has a nurse and doctor to offer vital primary health care. Your kindness ensures our Mental Health team are here to support people in deepest crisis. For those who need hospital A&E, we're by their side when there's nobody else to help. And when a homeless client is

discharged from hospital, MQI helps with an aftercare plan to keep them well.

Your values have led you to do your best for the people who need Merchants Quay Ireland. Thank you for being with MQI, caring for

the men and women who find themselves at our door. **Thank you for being their MQI family.** ■

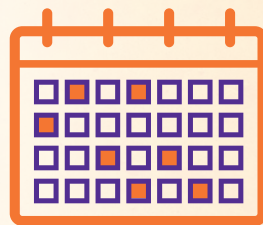
*Health Research Board, Deaths among people who were homeless in Ireland 2019. Published May 2023, ISSN 2737-7652



84
deaths

among people who were homeless in 2019

7
deaths per month



19% Female
39.5 years
Median age of death

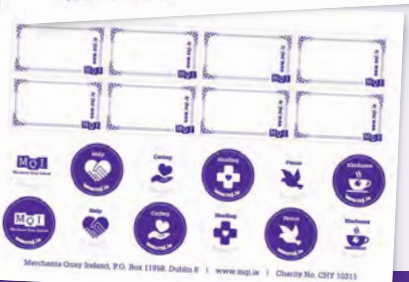


81% Male
40.5 years
Median age of death

Help Spread the Word About MQI's Work With Every Letter You Send:

Unless you've requested otherwise, with this newsletter you'll find an MQI summer tradition: Our gift of MQI address labels, to you. They're not fancy, and we print them right here. And they only cost around 7c per sheet. Until every person in Ireland has a place to call home, you'll help us spread the word by using the labels.

To request more any time, please ring us on 01 524 0139. Thank you! ■



Your faith is there for Jim to hold on to.

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looked at what was upsetting me enough to make me leave and it just wasn't worth it. It could have been a disaster, but I learned that talking about things that are bothering you, it makes you feel so much better."

With five weeks left to go at St. Francis Farm, Jim's making the very most of his time. He's enjoying working on the land, sowing and planting, using the strength of his body to soothe his soul. **In the woodworking studio, Jim discovered talents he didn't know he had.**

"I made a plaque for my son's 18th birthday. It's inscribed for him and inset with a clock. I'm really pleased because I know he'll like it and keep it forever."

Like every parent's feelings for their child, Jim's inscription to his son comes from the deep well of love in his heart:

*I can't believe you're 18.
I want to wish you the best birthday ever. I love you so much, I always have. You are the best person in my life. I'm so proud of the man you grew up to be, and I will always be a proud father.
Love you always, Dad xoxo*



Jim knows that you, our MQI family, walk with him on the road to recovery. It's your faith in the courage to try again that keeps clients strong. Your support of Merchants Quay Ireland, constant and steadfast, is there for Jim to hold on to. Thank you. Today Jim has another chance to be a proud father. ■

Helping clients to trust their wings – with Ronan's loving patience at St. Francis Farm

There's a brave little robin at St. Francis Farm who visits every day, even hopping up the steps and into the hall. Everyone calls him Roger, and Jim's counsellor, Ronan, feeds him by hand.

Ronan, draws on 22 years of experience at St. Francis Farm every time he listens to clients. Especially when, like Jim, they're going through the most difficult phase of rehab.

"There's a part of addiction which involves running away from self," explains Ronan. "People struggle because they're not practiced in talking about what's going on for them... managing

their emotions and their thinking. Quite often the thought creeps into their head to go back to the life of drug use and switch off this work of thinking and feeling. There's a part of the brain craving to go back to blank space, saying 'this is too hard. I can't handle this. This is too much.'

Many clients recover following a single treatment. Others need to work at rehab a number of times before they can resolve the trauma underpinning the addiction they've been slave to.

"It's natural and normal enough to have some of these old thoughts, of returning to drug use. But having these thoughts is not the problem. It's if the thought turns into action. If they leave here or return to drug use after being here - that's when the problems will come.

"So we encourage people to open up their mind from the old way of operating. We reflect on the journey into St. Francis Farm... when they came here for help in the first place. We encourage the client to think about their drug use with honesty. And people don't need a crystal ball to see the deep personal cost of that drug use."

Little Roger the robin is busy leading his fledglings down from the nest to where Ronan leaves mealworms for them. Before long, they'll trust their wings enough to soar. Just like Ronan sees with clients all year through at St. Francis Farm.

Thank you for helping to give clients their wings, and the time to learn that they can fly. ■



Ronan sees clients through the toughest times.

"Even the sound of Jane's Place makes me feel safe."
Molly, MQI client



Thank you for making a dream come true -- Jane's Place services for women by MQI.



Elaine Keogh, Head of Clinical Services at MQI wants to thank you for supporting our urgent appeal for Jane's Place nursing services for vulnerable women. Your donation is already at work. As you read this, we are actively preparing to open the doors this winter with a full team in place.

Too often, women in addiction and homelessness also suffer violence. The trauma and shame they live with silences them.

You understood.

Women described feeling nervous about coming for help in mixed-gender homeless

services. You listened.

Your support makes sure that any woman coming to Jane's Place, no matter what she's been through, will find loving medical care.

"MQI couldn't have done this without you. Your vision and leadership have made a dream come true for the women whom Jane's Place will serve." ■

*Thank you on behalf of
MQI's female clients.*

A Summer Wish List

People sleeping rough still have extreme weather to cope with even in summer. When scorched by the sun or drenched by the rain, that extra relief you give shows that someone still cares.

Can you help with any of these items?

- ✓ Sunscreen and sunhats to prevent sunburn
- ✓ Toiletries: shampoo, shower gel, toothpaste and toothbrushes
- ✓ New, packaged underwear and socks for men and women
- ✓ Light, waterproof rain jackets for men and women.

Donate your items in person to MQI at Merchants Court, 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday to Friday. Please ring us at **01 524 0139** to let us know you're on the way! ■

✓ BIG WISH

Defibrillator machine for Jane's Place womens' services.

Your donation towards the total cost of €2,000 can make this happen! Just ring Emma at **01 524 0965** if you'd like to help.

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

✉ **Email:** supporter@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.