

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

Thank you for seeing the humanity in every life story —

Niamh Had to Leave the Nest Before She'd Learned to Fly

You'd be so proud of Niamh. She came to St. Francis Farm like a little bird with a broken wing. Today she aims to study Social Care, to help others. All because you were there, her MQI family, to catch her...



"My heart is in the Farm... it was the first time in years I felt safe. The first time I wanted to give myself a chance."

It was the devastating wasteland of addiction that ripped her family apart. With her dad in Scotland, her mother gone, Niamh was left in the care of her brother who struggled with drugs.

"It used to upset me to see him using drugs. But as much as I hated it, I ended up using too." As things got worse, Niamh slipped into addiction.

"I didn't really have a way of

getting out, I had nowhere to go," she whispers.

In the end, she had to fend for herself. Trying to find her own way in the world at just 15 years of age.

How could she have known the dangers ahead? That being taken under the wing of an older man would lead to the nightmare of abuse and drugs that she suffered for the next five years.

But this is where your help

came in. You see, it really is the kindness you show that helps people start the journey of recovery.

Niamh smiles to herself when she remembers hearing about St. Francis Farm. "I didn't have a clue about treatment at the time, I didn't understand anything about recovery." But a little flame of hope had lit up in Niamh. Your kindness opened the door to her stay at St. Francis Farm.

"There I was, a ball of pain"

It was far from easy but at last, with counselling support, Niamh found a safe place to land. To open up.

"There I was, a ball of pain. But the staff are unbelievable. They're just so caring and compassionate. I started to learn, I suppose, the reasons why I was using – from trauma and pain, the feelings behind it and how my mind works."

Being outside, tending the vegetable gardens, gave Niamh space to think about her life. With the kindness of your support and with growing confidence, Niamh learned practical skills. Things she hadn't been taught in her own family home, like cooking nourishing meals from scratch.

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St. Francis Farm – Still Bearing Fruit in Your Name

Your annual supporter Open Day at St. Francis Farm is normally held in spring. A day when clients in recovery look forward to showing you, our treasured supporters, around the Farm - their home for now...

When the coronavirus broke, we were unable to host our Open Day, but we are proud to tell you St. Francis Farm stayed open while other drug treatment centres closed down. Your support made it possible. Staff are doing everything necessary to keep themselves and clients safe. Their determination – and your continued support – means the world to clients like Ray.

It’s his third week in rehabilitation at St. Francis Farm.

Ray’s voice is gentle and his soft brown eyes lower when he explains. “This is my second time here. I relapsed and fell back into that bad lifestyle.”

“There were major things knocking me back”

“I didn’t accept my life when I was here last time. It was paranoia, insecurity, serious childhood issues. I’m coming to terms with that now.

Through group therapy and one to one counselling and talking



After the work of sowing and weeding, clients enjoy the rewards of their harvest at St. Francis Farm.

to other fellas in the group, I’m finally dealing with my past and feeling more confident. Because if I keep carrying it around inside, not talking about it – I’ve seen what it’s like during that relapse.”

His chin drops to his chest. “Your mental health can go downhill very fast and it’s not nice. I was sitting with a bottle of vodka in front of me down at the river thinking ‘Am I going to throw myself in?’

“Today, my peace of mind is coming back and it’s a very, very valuable thing. Working on the farm, planting in the poly-tunnels, all that experience will help me when I start work again. So I’m grateful, I’m very happy I got the opportunity to come back again.”

Ray hasn’t given up on himself. His MQI family won’t either. For the second chances you give, for the hand up after a stumble – we thank you for getting people back on their feet again. ■

Christmas Gratitude Concert



We hope to still hold our annual Christmas Gratitude Concert featuring the Dublin Concert Band, a beloved tradition and one of our most wonderful donor events. Because of the coronavirus, it won’t be possible this year for our friends and supporters to be present in Adam and Eve’s Church. Instead we hope to record the concert for radio broadcast in December.

If you’d like to be updated as soon as we know the details, ring Emma on 01 524 0965. ■

A Rough Sleeper’s WISH LIST



The coldest and darkest months lie ahead for our homeless men and women. 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 so 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



Could You Grant This Big Wish?

The commercial fridge at High Park centre has been repaired so often, the time has come to replace it and save on repair costs. A very special generous gift of €2,600 would provide a new fridge to store all the meat, dairy and perishables used to teach clients how to prepare and cook nourishing meals from scratch.



Give your items in person to MQI at **24 Merchants Court, 10am to 4pm, Tuesdays and Fridays only**. Or if you’re in Dublin and can’t come to us, **ring Emma on 01 524 0965**. She will collect your donated items from your garden gate as soon as she can in 2021.

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Learning to Fly Again...

To trust and to heal

She pauses in reflection about that time. “The biggest thing for me though, and I still stand by this, was just learning to talk and be honest... yes, this did happen in the past, and it does affect me. And being able to cry and be vulnerable around a group of people.”

Your love helped Niamh to trust again. And to heal. “If I didn’t go to Merchants Quay, I’d probably be dead, to be honest. Getting physically, emotionally and mentally abused by my ex, allowing people to... basically do



Thanks to her time at St. Francis Farm, Niamh aims to study Social Care, to help others. All because you were there, her MQI family, to catch her.

what they want to me.”

Now in her early twenties, your support has travelled with Niamh onwards in her recovery journey through to Aftercare where she completed school. Her eyes shine with excitement as she looks forward to the Social Care

course she’s enrolled in.

Unknown ripples of good

Because you made it possible, her goal is to be of service to others. “I want to work with people, I want to help people.” She radiates the spirit of the unknown ripples of good that comes from your kindness and compassion. “I want to make a difference, because it was other people that got me to where I am today. It’s other people that cared about me when I didn’t care about myself.”

Please join us in keeping Niamh in your thoughts and prayers as she starts college. That the compassion in her heart carries her through, and her empathy is a healing balm to others. Just as yours was to her. ■

A Golden Afternoon at High Park’s Garden... Thanks to Your Kindness

MQI’s residential rehabilitation programme at High Park in Drumcondra offers a place for clients to reclaim their drug-free lives and start afresh. Horticultural therapy classes in the garden show how each morning brings growth. And all made possible by you...



“The garden teaches clients about perseverance, taking responsibility, and the joy of waiting in anticipation for buds to open,” explains garden instructor Siobhan.

To believe that real change is possible is one of the most powerful results of any recovery journey.

At a time when Kyle, Patrick, Ger, and Maria were deep in addiction and no one wanted to know them, you were there to support them.

Because of your caring hand, these young clients can learn how to change their lives completely.

Each week in High Park, our garden instructor Siobhan, leads therapy sessions where clients take responsibility for watering and weeding the vegetable patch and flower garden. All the while, gently and slowly, clients realise

their own need to be nurtured. So that they too can flourish.

If you have your own garden, even a pot of herbs on a windowsill, you’ll know it’s been a godsend during the coronavirus lockdown this year. Even when things don’t turn out. Little seedlings might struggle to get established. Slugs might come in during the night and break your heart in the morning. So you start again.

Just like you, our clients learn to deal with setbacks. To make new goals. To try something new. And never to give up.

In their own words, our High Park rehabilitation clients share with us the difference the garden makes to their journey of recovery.

“In addiction we always look outside us to help us feel better, always searching and never finding. Something as small as planting a seed and watching it blossom into a flower can help us value life and nature for what it is. I always left the class feeling better than when I came in.”

– Kyle, former High Park client

“I came into High Park a broken person. I didn’t trust anyone, and my world was a dark and gloomy place. Seeing the flowers all in bloom makes me smile. Minding something other than myself gives me a sense of well-being.”

– Ger, High Park client

“It helps ease my mind if I’m stressed. I feel like I’m given some sort of purpose by doing this. It shows me that I am capable of doing so much more than I have ever thought.”

– Patrick, High Park client

“Planting and watering my flowers takes me back to the good times I had in my childhood. I am grateful to be reminded and to re-live those parts of my life.”

– Maria, High Park client

For the self-esteem you give back. For the tremendous joy of the harvest and all its rewards, we thank you with all our hearts. ■

AT THE COALFACE

Four Questions With MQI Project Worker Paul:



A lifeline between clients and MQI during the pandemic, your kindness flows through Paul. He visits those most at risk of infection, sheltering in emergency accommodation, hotel rooms, and cocooning units. Bringing care and compassion in your name, Paul offers support with mental health, family, and addiction issues...

How is coronavirus affecting people who are homeless?

Some homeless people are elderly or have underlying conditions. So they're being sheltered in hostels or vacant hotel rooms just for now. Compared to what they came from, a lot of clients have only known the streets, so it's huge for them. I know one gentleman and it's the first time this chap has been in such a good place in maybe ten years. It's nearly like looking at a different man.

For people isolating, is loneliness a big issue?

The homeless community are already isolated from society, already on the outskirts. Put Covid-19 into the mix, and that just magnifies the loneliness. They're completely alone. For someone who might have mental health issues, spending so much

time on their own can be detrimental. So with the support of donors, we try to keep them safe and stable. Being able to have a simple chat and someone to listen to your fears can make all the difference.

How are people feeling about the future?

The question I get asked most, and it's daily, is "What happens after this?" I had a man say to me, "No one will care Paul. Once this is over, people will go back to their normal lives and I'll be sitting on the bridge." They're in limbo. With the comfort of a temporary place to call home comes the anxiety and stress of knowing that it could be pulled away. So, they're worrying and nearly waiting for that to happen. I don't have the answer but I can support them and be there for them.

What do you want MQI supporters to know about how they are helping?

That question, it fills me with emotion. It's hard to put into words. These people might have been rejected their whole lives, by their own mother and father, or by society and now they're on their own.

So for MQI supporters to extend a hand the way you do - and me being able to be the bridge between a donor and a client... Just thanks for thinking of them, because for a lot of people, no one thinks of them. I can't say enough about how grateful I am.

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

Would You Like Address Labels for Your Christmas Post?

Whether you're new to the work of MQI or you've used the last of your address labels...ring us. We'll be delighted to send you a sheet (or two!) of labels, free with our warmest compliments, personalised for your Christmas post.

Then while you're spreading the joy of the season, your post can have even greater meaning. It costs just pennies to print your labels, yet using them can create national awareness of Ireland's most vulnerable.

For your free labels, ring Maggie today on 01 524 0139.



A hot meal. A helping hand. A fresh start.

Thank You for a Thousand Warm Welcomes

A safe place to rest, when before there was a cold, hard pavement. A caring voice, where once there was no one. A 'how are you feeling?' and a hot meal when other doors were closed. In 2019 at MQI, just a single year, these were some of the wonders worked by kind support like yours...



109,010

meals for women and men who would have gone hungry



1,936

women and men given primary health care by our doctor and nurses



2,633

support sessions with homeless women and men helped by MQI's mental health team

546

young people aged 18-25 supported on a path out of homelessness



295

entrenched rough sleepers supported by our assertive outreach team



6,377

hot showers to warm cold bones and restore dignity



This autumn your gift is working hard in a million warm ways for those who have no one. **Thank you for every little victory.**



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



Volunteering: 01 524 0128



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.