

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

You Were There For Marianne When Her Own Family Couldn't Be

"There's a saying 'I'm not in recovery, I'm in discovery.' You have to go back to the start, to figure out what happened to you and why, so you can begin healing." Because of your kindness, Marianne can now dream of a future she hardly dared hope for...

With the quiet wisdom of one who has learned the power of forgiveness, Marianne shares her journey – a journey she could make thanks to you. She tells us how her experience with drugs began as a young child watching her older relatives. "I was eight or nine, I'd see my older brothers smoking joints and laughing and joking, and I wanted to be like them. I wanted to be liked, to be part of the fun."

What happened next sent Marianne reeling

Marianne's father moved away because his drinking escalated. Her brother's drug use deteriorated to a point where the house became unlivable. And then her mother left the family home with Marianne's younger siblings – determined to protect them from following the same road.

"By the time I was 16, my parents weren't in my life and I had to fend for myself. A lot happened to me around that time, where I needed my mother, I needed someone. I tried to make everything

look fine from the outside. But in reality, I was in a dark place and I felt really alone."

Marianne managed to stay in school until 5th year, trying to pretend like nothing was wrong. But inside she felt abandoned and very let down.

Her mental health started to suffer and, to numb her emotional hurt, she began experimenting with drugs. As Marianne's self-worth wore away, she began to slide into addiction and self-harm.

Shame keeps women trapped

The deep shame felt by women in addiction makes for the loneliest life imaginable. Marianne knows all

about that stigma and silence. She kept up the pretence, turning the best side out, even with her closest female friend.

"My friend, a girl I grew up with, was also struggling with addiction, but I was hiding it from her and she was hiding it from me. We'd just tell each other everything was fine. All that time – the two of us - looking at each other, suffering inside, but neither of us saying it. The shame was just too much."

You stepped in for Marianne when her own family couldn't. When she came to Merchants Quay Ireland ashamed and hurting, your kindness and compassion helped

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“ Merchants Quay helped me come to terms with the hurt and the anger I was holding onto for so long. I started to believe in myself. I learned how to laugh again. ”

“When I healed all the scars, I wanted a fresh start...”

You were there...

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her to heal. At St. Francis Farm Marianne reclaimed her drug-free life and learned all about forgiveness. For herself and for the people in her life who had let her down.

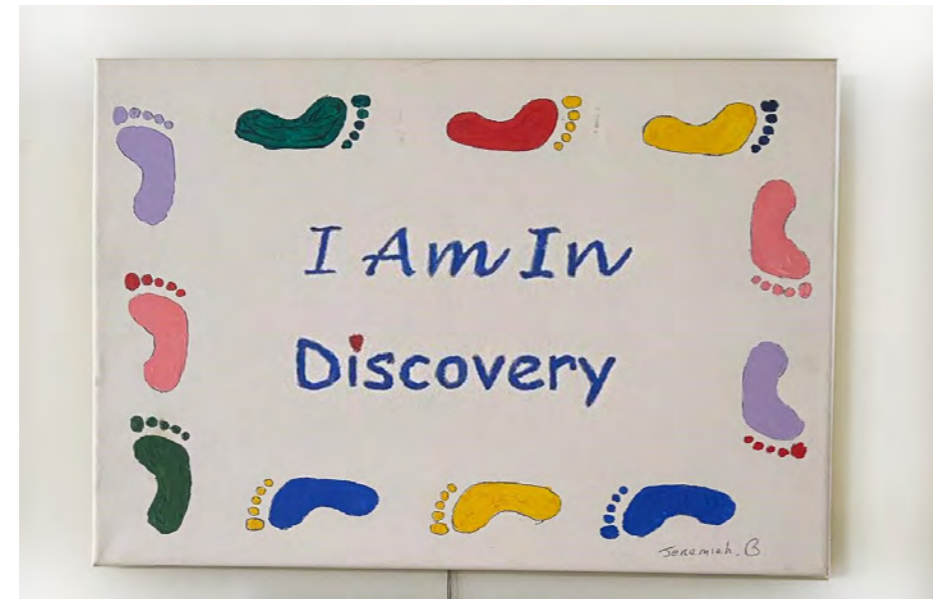
Her thoughtful voice drops as Marianne pulls up those painful memories. “I was ashamed of what I had done and who I had become. When I first went into St. Francis Farm, I couldn’t open up in group therapy. I was too ashamed of some of the things that had happened to me, I didn’t want to talk about it in front of the men. I felt I couldn’t let my guard down.”

But in time MQI became a place where Marianne could feel safe and supported. “Even though it was hard, I learned how to laugh again and to trust people, because I’d lost that.”



When her family couldn’t walk the journey with Marianne, you were there for her along that path. The generosity you share with MQI offers a new beginning, a future worth fighting for. But the past trauma, and the shame that weighs so much heavier on smaller shoulders, means that there are far fewer women than men who set out on that road.

When their self-esteem has been taken away from them, treatment is a very raw time for female clients. And surrounded by men, it can be



This is a piece of art which hangs on the wall in St Francis Farm. It was created by a past client to inspire people on their recovery journey. “When you’re in addiction you don’t grow up. You’re a child. So treatment is where you develop and discover who you really are,” explains Marianne.

difficult for them to open up. It isn’t easy for women – and it wasn’t easy for Marianne.

Healing the hurt and a fresh start

With your help, Marianne’s recovery journey progressed from St. Francis Farm to MQI’s Aftercare house – a follow on service entirely supported by your generosity.

Still very vulnerable, Marianne worked hard to rebuild her confidence and her life. “I went back to school and did my ABCs. I completed an addiction studies course with MQI and that inspired me to go on to college. My dream now is to become a counsellor. I believe you only keep what you have by giving it away.”

Your compassion along the way has meant everything to Marianne, as she looks forward to the future she’s fought so hard for. Because you were there for her, Marianne can believe in herself again.

Because of you, she now knows that she has something special to offer. She wants to

use her lived experience to help others. As well as attending online college throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Marianne has been volunteering as a mentor for people struggling with their recovery.

“I know what it feels like to be alone in this world, I just really wanted to reach out and be there for people. I wanted people to know there is help out there, I wanted to be that help.”

Marianne’s message to you is from the heart:

“You’ve changed not just my life – you’ve changed my whole family’s life too. My younger sisters can now look up to me. I have a relationship with my mother that I never had before. I am so lucky, I get to start my life again, you know? Anything is possible.”

We’re grateful every day for the lives you help save. For leading Marianne to St. Francis Farm – through discovery to recovery – thank you. ■

www.mqi.ie

For every step forward, for every new beginning - we thank you

MQI Pilots the First Female-Only Detox at St. Francis Farm – Thanks to You

The statistics are stark. For every 10 people entering St. Francis Farm’s medically-supervised detox unit, only 2 are women. The reasons so few women reach out for help were explored in a research study led by MQI...

“Covid-19 has increased the demand for treatment,” says Elaine Keogh, Clinical Nurse Manager at St. Francis Farm. “We’re receiving huge volumes of phone calls daily from family members saying, ‘I didn’t realise what was going on, my son or daughter needs help.’” Addiction remains a hidden struggle in Ireland, even more so for women.

Fewer women than men are asking for help. In Irish society it can be more acceptable for men to be in addiction than women. Thanks to our supporters, MQI led a research project to explore the challenges facing women in addiction. We wanted to listen to women, to learn more, and to respond better as an organisation to their complex needs.

What we know from working with our female clients, was borne out in this research: women face unique obstacles in accessing treatment and are often at crisis point when they do eventually ask for help. Stigma, shame and fear are massive barriers to seeking help.

Fear of being labelled “bad mothers” and having their children taken into care can prevent women from raising their hand to ask for support. Women in situations of exploitation, control and violence are often too fearful to reach out.

For those women who manage to get a place on a recovery programme, it can be a very difficult experience for them. “Trauma is a major issue. In childhood and then as adults, females carry a huge amount of trauma that typically is perpetrated by males,” explains Elaine.

Thanks to your compassion, we can learn from the research and respond immediately by offering a female-



“Women can feel uncomfortable talking about past trauma in a group-therapy situation that’s mostly made up of men,” says Elaine, Clinical Nurse Manager.

only detox programme. “We hope that this programme will give women a chance to open up in a safe environment, where they can support each other through their recovery journeys,” says Elaine. “And by showing women they have a safe place to go, hopefully more women struggling with addiction will find the courage to reach out for help sooner.”

Your generous support has made our female-only detox programme possible – for the very first time.

Right now, a group of hopeful women are beginning their journey with MQI to reclaim their drug-free lives.

You will be with these brave women every step of the way. When they share their stories with each other, resolving the issues that lie beneath their pain. When their shame and fear are lifted away. You will be with each of them as they start to heal the hurt and believe in themselves again. ■

Thank you for helping create safe spaces for vulnerable women to heal and feel heard.

www.mqi.ie

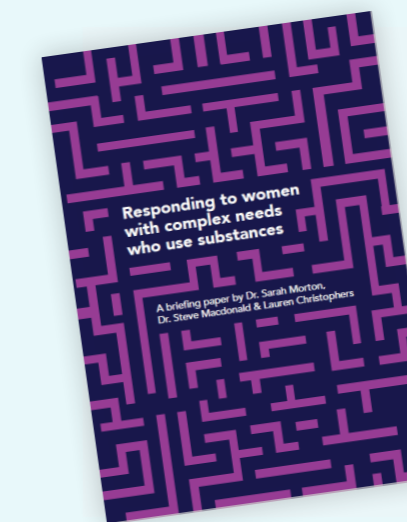
MQI Detox and Rehab

365 days of the year. St. Francis Farm and High Park remained open for clients seeking treatment throughout 2020 despite the coronavirus pandemic.

112 clients successfully completed MQI’s residential detox and rehabilitation programmes last year.

809 men and women with entrenched addiction turned to MQI for help – and began working with our team to get ready to take on the programme.

1 past St. Francis Farm client is now volunteering as a mentor for current men and women in detox and rehab.



If you would like to read more about the research study, you can find it on our website, www.mqi.ie. Or get in touch with our team at **01 524 0139**, and we can send you a copy.

www.mqi.ie

You Are Our Hands, Our Strength. Thank You!



Laura, MQI Donor Care team, shows us all how to stretch before a run :)

You took part in solitary marathons, swim-a-thons, virtual yoga classes and walkathons. You got up early on cold mornings. You went out and trained even on rainy days and dark evenings.

You could have decided not to. You could have found any number of reasons – let alone a global pandemic! But you were thinking of the men and women who come to Merchants Quay Ireland for help – you put on your runners and [you did it for them](#).

Thank you from all the team here!

You are all part of the MQI family – despite the coronavirus pandemic, your support didn’t waver.

We are so grateful to everyone who celebrated their birthday by asking nothing for themselves but for family and friends to make a donation to MQI. Thank you for making the occasion so meaningful.

Congratulations to all the newly wed couples who used our Wedding Favours. On the very first day of your lives together – you kept a place at your table for Merchants Quay Ireland’s clients. Thank you. May you always be blessed with plenty to share.

Thank you to the parish and community groups, active retirement clubs and schools who, in spite of everything still found a way to get involved, sending essential supplies with notes of encouragement for clients. You are our MQI heroes!

If you would like to learn more about the different ways you can fundraise for MQI, we’re here to help: contact Maggie Byrne, our Donor Care Officer on 01 524 0139 or maggie.byrne@mqi.ie. ■

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Share Your Wisdom in Merchants Quay Ireland's Book of Love...

*Your words, your story – **your testament** – can be a powerful force for good through the generations...*

Sometimes the greatest healing comes in the gentle words of a stranger. Someone we've never met touches our heart and mind with their story.

So many of you have reached out over the last year and shared your kind thoughts and words of wisdom in letters and cards. We have shared these with our clients, providing them with comfort and reassurance. And so, you have inspired us to start the MQI Book of Love.

The MQI Book of Love is a collection of messages of hope and encouragement, written by you, for clients in our rehabilitation centres to read. As men and women take their first nervous steps into their new drug-free lives – your words of wisdom will offer them guidance and inspiration.

Share your precious memories

You might wish to share the memory of a departed loved one who still lives in your heart. How wonderful it is to celebrate our precious memories of the people we love. To remember and share what they taught us.

The MQI Book of Love will be cherished here forever, always growing as more of our MQI family add to it. It will be read by clients in recovery at St. Francis Farm and High Park, year after year.



You will not only be remembered. At the heart of MQI, your story will live on.

Everyone fights a battle – send your message through the generations to raise them up when they need it most. The courage it takes to share your story might be the very thing someone else needs to open their heart to hope.

Help them to always remember that they are loved. Fill their hearts with your message of understanding and compassion as you share your own life's experiences: *your*

struggles, lessons and victories.

You will not only be remembered. At the heart of MQI, your story will live on.

Legacy gifts and donations in memory of loved ones help MQI continue to be there for people with nowhere else to turn. Whether or not you're able to make a donation, you can leave a legacy of wisdom and compassion for future generations.

If you'd like to add to MQI's Book of Love, just use the leaflet enclosed and send it back in your purple envelope. If you'd like more information or help to record your unique contribution, Emma is on hand at 01 524 0965 or emma.murphy@mqi.ie. ■

As new hope blossoms, you are there. Thank you.

Thank you for maintaining our cherished Lenten tradition —

Thank You for Sundays that Nurture Body, Soul and Mind

It's the loneliest day of the week for people who are on the streets, desperate and in crisis. But when all other doors in the city are closed, your kindness has protected for another year the only free hot Sunday lunch. And because of your help, the Sunday Service will also offer **crucial mental health support** to people left even more excluded and isolated during the pandemic. Thank you.

So many people are new to homelessness, not knowing where to turn for help. If it wasn't for you, they'd go hungry and be left to walk alone with their worries. Now, when so many new faces call to the door for their Sunday lunch, your generosity does more. People deep in depression and crippled by anxiety can get the mental health interventions they need.

"Having a mental health worker on hand for people in crisis on Sundays will make the world of difference to those who are suffering and feeling alone," says Sarah Scully, MQI mental health case worker. "Thank you to our donors for providing this lifeline."

Thank you for being there, just in time. ■

A Springtime Wish List...

It's spring at last and the hens are laying at St. Francis Farm! The flower gardens, vegetable beds and polytunnels are keeping our clients very busy on the farm. Indoors, we're sprucing up and spring cleaning. If you'd like to help with a donation for these Wish List items, we'd be very grateful.

- ✓ Refresh and renew a bedroom in our rehabilitation centre with your gift of €500
- ✓ A gift of €250 can help provide horticultural supplies, gardening tools and animal feed
- ✓ A warm welcome gift of fresh PJs, towels, basic toiletries, and underwear for clients arriving with very little
- ✓ **BIG WISH!** A vehicle is needed for transporting clients and running errands for St. Francis Farm €15,000 (includes a year's running costs.)
- ✓ For clients attending our Riverbank centre: new, packaged socks and underwear are always needed

Please don't travel until the public health advice says it's safe. Instead, we would be very grateful to receive your donation over the phone towards these essential items. Call **Emma** at **01 524 0965** if you'd like to make arrangements. ■

Thank you, and stay safe!



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

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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.