

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

SUMMER 2020

Easing the Hurt of the Lonely: How homelessness during COVID is devastating mental health, and how you're helping



Recently we caught up with Sarah, part of MQI's mental health team helping people who are homeless, isolated, and suffering emotionally. The stories she shared paint a vivid picture of the relief you are bringing right now...

There is a couple she is helping, Sarah tells you.

They are homeless. Not long ago they both had to be tested for coronavirus, and so were placed in a StayCity apartment. "Now," she continues, her voice bittersweet, "for that couple it was such a break for them. Because it was an apartment, and it's something

they're not used to, and they loved the space. They just loved being there, and they wanted to stay. But they



A couple upset at returning to a hostel after quarantine in a StayCity apartment are being helped by our mental health team thanks to you.

had to leave. So if you can imagine suddenly having to go back to a hostel and the reality of their situation after that, it's been quite difficult on them emotionally."

Another gentleman she is working with has been sober – alcohol free – for years and years. Then came COVID-19, and he couldn't attend the in-person AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings

he always relied on. "For him," Sarah softly explains, *Special report continued on page 2* ▶

Ireland's hidden homeless needed you, and you were there —

A Very Special Thank You From MQI Assertive Outreach

You did it! And there are no greater words we can give you than, "Thank you, thank you, with ALL our hearts"...

What an honour it is to report to you that as a direct result of your incredible support, MQI's Assertive Outreach team is now funded for expansion!

In the weeks ahead your generosity will mean longer team shifts and additional routes in the city... and that means more of

Ireland's hidden homeless and rough sleepers will be found and helped and supported at a time when they desperately need that help – and linked to all of MQI's other health, mental health, and food services that you also so kindly support. At last, their isolation can begin to lift. Thank



MQI's Assertive Outreach team: funded for expansion, thanks to you!

you for standing strong for Ireland's hidden homeless.

You are our hearts, our hands, our hero. ■

Easing the Hurt of the Lonely: How homelessness during COVID is devastating mental health, and how you're helping

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“he’s not tech savvy. Although AA offer loads of supports online, he doesn’t have access to a computer. So he’s missing out on all of that. It’s been really tough for him.”

A hero’s work, a work of the heart

Rough sleepers. Couples in hostels. People fighting daily to stay drug-free despite their difficult situation. As part of her day to day work on the MQI Mental Health Team, Sarah tries her best to help them all in your honour. It is a hero’s work, and a work of the heart. Because people are really suffering through this isolation, and people who are homeless are among the most isolated and lonely of all.



“He told us he’d just spent weeks staring at a wall,” said Sarah of a client she recently helped as a result of your generosity.

“We had one man, in his 40s, who came to our door in crisis,” she tells you. “He had cycled down to our service just to speak to someone in person. We’re not allowed to do any face-to-face counselling right now – only if it’s a crisis situation.” Sarah took one look at the man and let him in. “He told us he’d spent weeks just staring at a wall. All his supports were not accessible. Imagine the courage it took to tell us he’d self-harmed in the past, and

that he was terrified he’d become suicidal again if he didn’t speak to someone. He left that day knowing he could come back to us, come down to our food service, and with a connection to the mental health team so he wouldn’t ever have to face a crisis like

that alone again. He told us the meeting had really helped him and he was so thankful for our support.”

Giving their level best, and then some

It’s a direct result of your generosity that MQI is known as a place where people can come for one-to-one, face-to-face support. Support that makes a person feel seen and heard and cared for, a welcome part of something no matter how dirty their clothes or the tragedy of their past. Right now those meetings are not possible. But with hope in her eyes, Sarah shares how she and the team are doing their best with phone counselling. “Us phoning people, it could be one of their only supports. So I try to think from the client’s point of view. If they’re in a hostel, I can’t have



MQI’s mental health supports by phone are some of the only supports our women and men have right now. Thank you for making that possible.

them giving me their private information with other people listening. So I’ll see if they can find a quiet park bench, it’s even thinking of that.”

Forever thinking of, and thanking, you

Sarah also wants you to know she is thinking of you. “Anything you’ve given is greatly appreciated, because it keeps Merchants Quay alive and ticking over. I wish I could let you see how far your money goes, we’re socially distanced but all the staff are still delivering great support – still there with that connection, whether it’s the lads who are flat-out handing out food parcels to women and men in need, our crisis service, or the nurse and the GP, we’re still here for people because of you. If you are struggling in any way right now, please reach out to someone for help.” ■

Mental Health Tips For You, From Sarah

If you are struggling emotionally or feeling a bit 'lost' right now – even if you’ve never struggled before – Sarah wants you to know you are not alone, and offers this advice...

- ♥ **If you are struggling in any way, reach out.** It’s okay. Irish charity Alone still offer a coronavirus support line for older people, 8am to 8pm, on **0818 222 024**. Please ring them if you need to.
- ♥ **Try not to isolate yourself too much.** Ring a family member or friend you can talk to. Please remember you’re not a bother to anyone, and you are still strong.
- ♥ **Explore a new hobby if you're able,** something you’ve always wanted to try.
- ♥ **Try and get out, even a bit if you can.** Chat with a neighbour between your front gardens, or get a bit of air and stretch your legs, even if it’s just in your garden.



Sarah

“Even if you’ve been alright for your life and you never needed to reach out, try not to let pride get in the way,” Sarah wants you to know. “It’s okay. The importance is having that connection.”

At MQI, you are family to us. So please keep safe, and please know, you are forever in our hearts, thoughts, and prayers. Thank you for being the light that you are.

From the COVID Frontline With Continued Love & Gratitude, for You

You had your worries. Your own doubts and fears. And still you reached out to help others less fortunate during COVID-19. In the twenty-plus weeks since Ireland went into lockdown, your grace and generosity for people who are homeless has never faltered. Today we give thanks for the overwhelmingly abundant help, humanity, and healing you continue to make possible for people in dire straits – and share what we hope lies ahead. Thank you...

What You're Making Possible Right Now

Demand for the services you support is on the rise, and it’s such a massive help to have had the funds to adapt to safely provide the following for clients in need:

- Emergency client services operating out of Riverbank, Monday to Friday from 8am to 9pm
- On-demand, takeaway food parcels – plus hot takeaway meals at noon and 4pm
- Nursing and healthcare services at Riverbank, in protective gear
- Outreach for people still on the streets (a number that is also, sadly, climbing)
- Mental health phone counselling and in-person crisis support if needed

- New socks, jocks, and basic hygiene packs

Where the Home Fires Still Burn, Thanks to You: Dave the Chef

“All of us in the MQI kitchen crew really miss the clients. Handing them a cup of tea and having that one-to-one banter, and seeing how they’re getting on. It seemed like

such a comfort for them to be able to come in. But we’re now providing hot takeaway meals twice a day as well – be that curry, chili, shepherd’s pie, lasagne, or pie and beans. We prepare it here and package it up so the lads can hand it out. Thanks to our supporters we are still trying to help people out the best we can.”



Chef Dave

The Lifeline of Your Love During Coronavirus... Literally:

From April to mid-June alone your outpouring of kindness has meant:

6,000	Takeaway food parcels, prepared with love and care for people who mightn’t have eaten at all	
1,000+	New socks and jocks, for women and men who’d nowhere to shower or bathe	
800	Nearly eight hundred crisis contacts with everyone from entrenched rough sleepers to homeless couples needing help, all at a safe distance	
701	Mental health interventions, January to May, by Sarah and the MQI mental health team (see story, page 1)	
319	Nursing visits to safely dress wounds and care for our people still the streets	

Autumn and Winter: The Road Ahead

Although it is still the middle of summer, everyone here is thinking about when days turn cold, dark, and damp. And we are doing as best we can with what we have, to prepare – looking at some kind of shower set up and stand-alone

hand wash basins in our drop-in centre, and working hard to see if we can safely open day services again in some format. It’s been so hard for the men and women who need us. **But with you by our side, we’ll do our very best – and we thank you today and always, for everything.** ■



Could You Grant This Big Wish?

JUST in! The Assertive Outreach team would love a van to help transport dry clothes, food, and hygiene packs to where they find people in distress on the streets. **The cost is €15,000,** but the van will be lifesaver in cold, harsh weather, and help cover more ground.

If you can make this wish come true, contact Emma on **01 524 0965** or **Emma.Murphy@mqi.ie** or use the reply slip provided.

Thank you!





From the Postbag of MQI: Your Thoughts & Prayers, Delivered

The cards, letters, and notes began arriving during some of Ireland's most difficult days. Each holding messages of love for the people trying to survive coronavirus with no homes of their own, and for our staff working tirelessly to help them. And each message came from you, our steadfast, compassionate MQI family. Below are but a few – thank you with all our hearts...

💜 To 'someone in recovery from Alcohol,' who wrote:

"Thinking of you all daily. May you find strength, hope, love and acceptance daily."

Dear friend in recovery:

Thank you for taking the time to reach out to others at a time when you are also struggling. Please reach out if you need support, you are needed in this world! May the strength and love you send to others return to you in abundance.

💜 To D.C., who wrote:

"Without your organisation I would have difficulty finding a really efficient and devoted group through which my small contributions are translated into such tender personal care for those who are my brothers and sisters."

Dear D.C., thank you so much for your kind words:

Please know, every donation – whether small or large – matters here! Whether it's €6 for a hot takeaway meal that feeds a person on the streets, or €6,000 to help fund someone's recovery journey, your generosity means the world. Thank you!



Times are still uncertain – and post may be delayed. But CEO Paula Byrne and several other MQI staff are still reading and responding to your messages, and so very glad to do so. Thank you for writing!

💜 To P.M., who wrote:

"I sent you a donation late this spring and I hope you received it. Reading the stories from your staff at the frontline really make you appreciate things we normally take for granted, like having a home and all the simple things that go with that."

Dear P.M., I am so glad you wrote: prompt, sincere thanking underpins all that MQI do. I'm so sorry for the delay and have just confirmed my thank you letter will

have reached you by now. But for any others whose thank-you may not yet have arrived, we're just back into the offices on a very limited schedule and working to send our thanks to you as quickly as possible. **For any of our lovely supporters who can provide us with your phone and email address on the enclosed reply form, no donation required, we are delighted to communicate that way as well and will respect your privacy.** Thank you again!

💜 To 'E,' who wrote:

"To people who come to Merchants Quay for companionship and assistance, I am thinking of you at this strange and lonely time. As Quakers say, 'I am holding you in the light.' Please know that you are not forgotten, and that people are thinking of you."

Dear 'E,' what a beautiful message: Each and every one of us holds you in the light, too – and all the kind and generous MQI supporters like you. We feel and appreciate your love and support and hope, today and always, that you feel our love and support for you. Thank you.

"The act of writing itself is an act of love."

— Georges Rodenbach

Here there is hope, because of you.

The Year Without A Donor Open Day

Like so many special events this year, the annual and much-loved Donor Open Day at MQI's Dublin-based High Park recovery service has had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus. Your generosity is still alive and well there, as well as at St. Francis Farm in Tullow, and we wanted to let you know you are still helping people take their first steps to new drug-free lives even now... delighted as well to let you know that thanks to restricted access and careful protections put into place, both have remained Covid-free! This is very welcome news as so many of our clients arrive out of homelessness and in extremely fragile health. **Until we are together again at another Donor Open Day, please know you are in every journey of recovery here. Thank you! ♥**



With extremely limited outside access and careful in-house protections put into place, MQI's High Park residential recovery programme is still Covid-free and helping people move on to new drug-free lives thanks to your kindness and generosity.

What Story Do You Want Your Life to Tell?

During days when it seems we are all pondering our own mortality, with that come reflections on what you want your life to have stood for at the end of the day. Love for family, love for friends, and a compassion for humanity are but a few qualities precious to many. By leaving a gift in your will

to MQI, large or small, you can make a tremendous difference to the lives of vulnerable people who are in crying need of help, right here in Ireland.

For more on how to include the work of MQI in your will, and a free packet on legacy giving, ring Emma on **01 524 0965** or email **Emma.Murphy@mqi.ie**.







The life story you want to tell matters to us here. Let us help you tell it with respect and love. ■



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:** 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.