

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

You'd be so proud of Joan today, you'd give her your biggest, warmest hug.

Her tiny frame sits cross-legged on the sofa at MQI's High Park, our drug-free rehabilitation centre. She's half way through the programme and only now is life opening up for Joan. Two years ago she wanted to end it all. Today, she wants you to know how grateful she is for the second chance...

There's a beautifully kept pink teddy bear on the bed in Joan's room at High Park. It's made of the satin from her mother's night-dress. That's all she has left of the mother she lost when she was just 10 years old. Heartbreakingly, her mother died just four days after Joan's baby sister was born. At a time that should have been filled with joy, the family was left devastated.

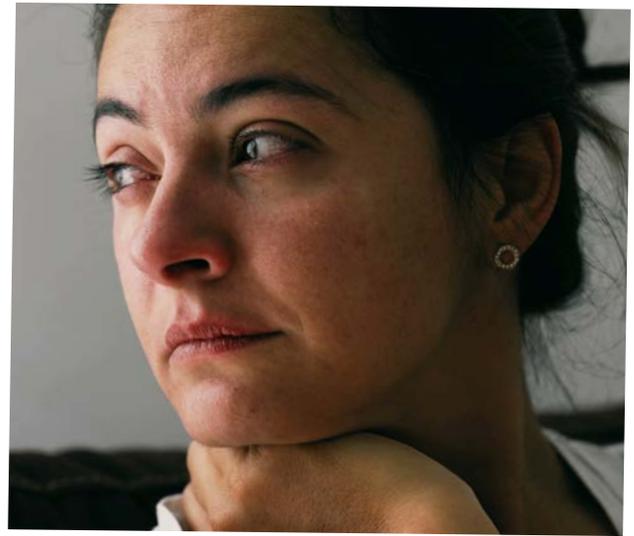
This event changed Joan's life forever. At just 10 she was forced to take on the responsibility of minding her baby sister. Her father, who couldn't cope, turned to drink to block it all out himself; leaving Joan on her own. Shockingly, in her isolation and loneliness, a family member violated her innocence. Is it any surprise she started

self medicating - taking bottle after bottle of the baby's pink medication to cope with her own pain.

Her cheeks burn red when Joan describes her childhood. *"My pain is like a ball in my stomach. It's physical pain. I haven't been able to release it until now. I ran from it through drugs. Taking drugs makes you feel rotten, physically sick. But feeling the emotional pain was something I just couldn't cope with."*

Now 46 years old, with decades of addiction to resolve, Joan is embracing recovery at High Park. *"I have to heal the damage to my mental health. I couldn't manage my addiction anymore, after all the years of trying to find safety."*

Joan takes a deep, thoughtful



Your kindness will mean a second chance for more people like Joan.

breath before continuing. *"People don't always see that addiction comes from suffering in childhood. My mental health was severely damaged by grief and the trauma of sexual abuse,"* she says softly. At just 12 she had turned to drugs to try to escape her reality. Before she knew it Joan was a teenager caught in addiction.

Homeless at 17

"My dad remarried but my stepmum didn't want me in the house. At 17, I was in homeless

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"I was 10 when I lost my Mammy, I don't think I've ever been as hurt." - Joan



For all the journeys yet to come, we thank you

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hostels, the bed pushed against the door so others couldn't fight or rob me. Even while taking drugs, I wanted a better life. I went to college at night, I built myself up and worked hard to get better jobs, all the time hiding my addiction. I was always chasing security. But really, I've always been running from myself...until now."

Craving stability

"When I look back on my decisions in life, I wonder how times could have been different. Feeling so damaged, I craved stability, for example in my marriage, but it didn't work". Joan had two sons with her unfaithful, bullying husband. She stopped using drugs during both pregnancies. But the relationship was frightening and threatening; and drugs crept back



Each client is able to have their own space thanks to your caring gifts. A peaceful environment, where they can begin to heal.

into her life. She thought it was the only way to block the pain she felt. *"I overdosed twice, I prayed I wouldn't wake up. My sons are grown now, and I've come clean with them. I'm going to be the best version of myself... for them."*

You can see the hope in her eyes, as Joan shares how your kindness gave her the second chance she needed to start again. *"Being at High Park is the hardest thing I've ever done, but it's a blessing to be here. Without it, I wouldn't have lived. I didn't want to. You need help and support to look deep inside yourself and get better. Not to be treated like dirt under people's shoes."*

"I've cried inconsolably. I realised that even before

the sexual abuse, before my mother died, I'd been surrounded by family violence and alcoholism. Recovering from my own addiction is about learning better ways to deal with that trauma. The team here in High Park are helping me understand my behaviours. During group work and one on one time it's helping me realise why I do things the way I do. And now, with the right support, I can start to change."

People don't choose to become addicts

"People don't choose to become addicts, it comes from mental trauma. The feeling that you can't function in your own body because of the pain of the past. But there are kind, lost people behind addiction. Good people who end up losing their lives. If High Park wasn't here for me, I'd be gone now."

Your compassion supports good people like Joan every day at MQI. Her life is in your good hands. You are the safety and security Joan needed as a little girl. Thank you for Joan's new beginning. ■

"There are kind, lost people behind addiction. Good people who end up losing their lives." - Joan

Your virtual tour of High Park – see where Joan and many other clients are finding their path of Recovery



For each kind word. For every listening ear.
Thank you for being part of their MQI family

AT THE COALFACE

Four questions with Project Worker Helen

Helen has worked in addiction services for more than twenty years. She understands that each client arriving at High Park, MQI's residential drug-free rehab, brings their own individual story. She also sees how people can thrive when they have trust, structure and safety. It's thanks to you, that clients are offered this support in spades in High Park.

What was it that drew you to work here at High Park?

The area I grew up in was savaged by addiction and in those days, nobody really knew what recovery was, or even that it was possible. I've seen people overdose on the street. And I know people myself who have died from overdose. So later in life, I wanted to be part of helping people to change and

recover. I started here in 2000. The staff are mostly here long-term. So, you build strong relationships with the team and clients.

Can you share a story with our donors, from your time in High Park?

I've met many amazing people but Derrick really stands out. He had a tough life, with childhood trauma, poverty, and family addiction. He spent years in juvenile centres and prison, never really getting a fair chance at life. When he arrived at our programme, he struggled to talk and felt a lot of shame.

At High Park, we have weekly music and singing nights to help build confidence. At first, Derrick couldn't even open his mouth to sing. But by the end, he was singing in front of everyone! This boost in confidence supported his recovery. He opened up about his childhood trauma, and found a way forward.

Now he has reconnected with his family.

What is the experience of High Park Recovery like for clients?

Initially, people are settling in, very shy, quiet, unsure and often scared. It's a very vulnerable phase. So an environment of understanding and compassion is key.

Thanks to donors we're able to provide a large variety of activities within the programme. Some therapeutic and some more holistic. For example, we would include group therapy in everyone's programme, where the clients can start to share their experiences. That's where a lot of deeply rooted pain comes up and the peer support begins to grow. There are also one-to-one counselling sessions. Away from those more structured activities we include lots of other therapies like horticulture, music and art. We build a lot of life skills that clients didn't grow up with. Learning how to cook, do their own laundry and keep their rooms and the common areas clean and tidy. There's also a football team,

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“Every bit of love that you send here; please know, it makes a huge difference. We wouldn't be here without you.”





Art Therapy gives clients the freedom to explore their journey through art. It's made possible thanks to you.

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yoga and the gym to help build physical health.

So, when supporters give a gift to MOI, it doesn't just provide food and shelter here in High Park, but also starts to heal wounds, build confidence and provide foundations for the rest of their journey through recovery.

Helen what would you like to say to MOI supporters directly?

Basically we would not be here without you. We could not have supported and facilitated change in not only our client's lives but also in so many families, and children's lives too. Every gift makes a difference. Every bit of love that you send here; please know, it makes a huge difference. We wouldn't be here without you.

It's that simple. ■

Special words of thanks for you

As clients leave High Park to build brighter futures for themselves, they share words of thanks to you. For your belief in them.

I had a stomach full of pain and suffering, guilt and shame and hated myself for everything I'd messed up. Thank you for giving me the keys to my heart to unlock my fear and hurt. You've given me freedom at last. Divine intervention happens in the strangest ways. Thank you for giving me my life back. Eamonn

Not everyone gets this opportunity. I was one of the lucky ones. You have to dig deep and summon up the strength and courage. But the good days are coming. Let your light shine so you can find your way. Sean

★ *I firmly believe that High Park has saved my life. It is the most important home that I have ever lived in throughout my life. I gained the knowledge to live a drink and drug-free life. I so very nearly died prior to getting here due to my addiction. ★ Una ★*

It took me a number of weeks to settle into my new 'home' and the group of people I would share it with. I will be forever indebted to all the key workers for their time and patience. It has been one of the best experiences of my life. Martin

Turn to page 5 for your personal invite to High Park. There, you will see your love in action at the Supporter Open Day.

Your Open Day at High Park

Be Our Guest

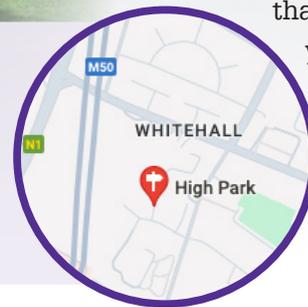
You're warmly invited to our annual supporter open day in the heart of Drumcondra, Dublin 9. There you can see, over a cuppa and a biscuit, the work that you make happen. Staff like Helen and clients like Joan, will be eagerly waiting to welcome you to MQI's amazing residential rehab service. Sharing the inspiring stories that unfold thanks to your generosity.

Spaces are limited! **We'd love to see you there!** ■

When: September 7th (arrive any time between 11am - 2pm)

Where: High Park Residential Rehabilitation Centre, Drumcondra, Dublin 9 D09 N2N7 (minutes off the M50!)

How: To be included on the guestlist, please RSVP to Shauna by 4th September on 01 524 0139.



A Summer Wish List

People often think the rain and the cold are the worst conditions to be facing while living on the streets. But, summer can bring its own hardships, long days walking around, sun exposure, and incorrect clothing are just a few.

Can you help with any of these items?

- ✓ New packaged underwear and socks for men and women
- ✓ Toiletries, men's shaving razors and cream
- ✓ Sunscreen and baseball caps to prevent sunburn and heat stroke.
- ✓ Clothing for homeless women (small and medium: leggings, jeans, t-shirts, and hoodies)
- ✓ Men's tracksuit bottoms and t-shirts (small and medium)
- ✓ Gently used runners for men and women



✓ BIG WISH

After years of serving so many clients, the ten bathrooms and showers at High Park are very much in dire need of upgrading.

Can you help fix one of them with a single gift of €2,500 to give people the decency they deserve while in rehab?

Please ring your Donor Care Team at 01 524 0139 to arrange dropping off at our fundraising office!

As with previous Big Wishes, any surplus will go to frontline services at MQI, which bring people back from the brink, week on week.

Thank you!

Steps in the right direction – an update from MQI's CEO Eddie Mullins



As you know, the Medically Supervised Injection Facility (MSIF) has been an ongoing journey. A journey that we're very grateful to have you standing with us on, protecting precious lives. Thank you for doing what's right at a time when it's needed more than ever.

Opening the MSIF shows that as a society we are putting some of the country's most vulnerable people first and providing a much-needed medical service. Currently, Ireland loses almost one person a day to overdose. One more family without a son or daughter.

All too often people overdose alone, in a room or down an alley. But you, and MQI are standing together, to reduce the devastating harm caused by drug use.

The MSIF will mean dignity for people. Clean, safe spaces, where medical professionals are on hand to help.

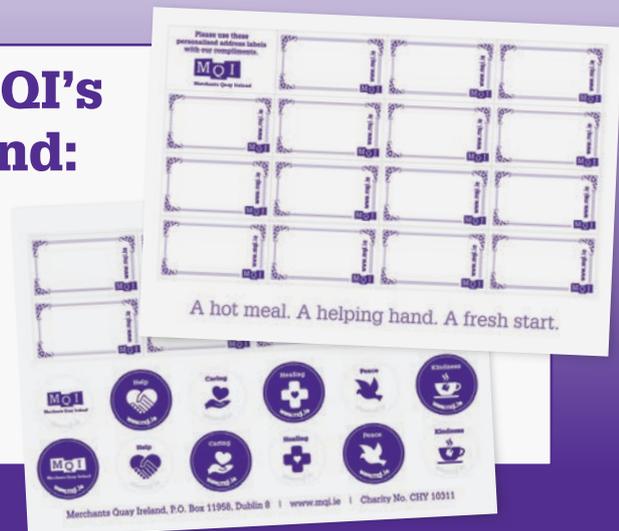
Building works have started on this groundbreaking service within the basement of our Riverbank drop-in centre, and we're on track to open by the end of 2024.

If you ever have any questions about the MSIF please call us on 01 524 0139. We're happy to chat to you. ■

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

Please accept your MQI address labels as a little gift from us. Every time you use them, you'll spread the word about the life-saving work you help with – until everyone has an address to call

home. If you'd like more, just ring your Donor Care team at **01 524 0139**, we print them ourselves, so they cost next-to-nothing. **Thank you!** ■



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

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Dublin 8

To make your gift by phone: please ring us on 01 524 0139.

Telephone: 01 524 0139

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.