

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

When every door was closed to Luke, your generosity extended a hand —

“For As Long As I Live”

It is the most powerful postscript to any recovery story: Luke is still alive. At a time when he was deep in addiction and no one wanted to know him, your support of MQI was there. And in giving, you changed his life completely...

Compared to being homeless, prison was a relief. Luke was glad to be indoors again, glad to build himself back up. But he knew this had to be it. He had cried at the clinic, cried knowing the streets and the addiction were taking a final toll. He was not much older than 30. “If I was out of prison for any length of time, I was ending up in hospital. My health was giving in on me. I was asking people about treatment but there were all kinds of barriers.”

Before the fall

You’ve read before about the steep barriers to treatment for those who are in active addiction and homelessness. Through your support of MQI, you are removing those barriers by funding our detox and rehab programmes at High Park, and St. Francis Farm – where a prison van brought Luke on the day his sentence finished. In truth, though, you’d started helping him up long before that.

“I was really messed up”

Luke says he knows other people who grew up in the same kind of



“I know it’s not a fashionable thing to donate to, helping homeless people like me with addiction problems – it’s all bad press all the time. My hat goes off to MQI supporters, because they care about us. As much as you hear about the failures, there is good. We are back working, contributing to society, helping out other people. It does happen. I can’t express what I owe to you. Merchants Quay turned my life around. For as long as I live I will do whatever I can to give back, forever.”

difficult environment he did and “their lives didn’t go off the rails.” Yet for a thousand different reasons, Luke’s did. Drugs crept into his life – he was addicted before he could stop it. (This is not uncommon. In “A Year On with

Antoinette” on page 5, she shares a similar story.) Homelessness soon followed. “I was really messed up,” he says, with clear disbelief at how far your support has carried him.

“When I was bad on the drugs, MQI
continued on page 6

[Your Money At Work: Help from head to toe, see page 3...](#)

"When I was in prison and no one wanted to know m

"What our donors are doing for homeless young people is a gift..."

One Year On with Antoinette

A little over a year ago you helped to fund and protect her position as MQI Young Person's Support worker for 24 full months. Just past the halfway mark into that role, Antoinette paused to talk about the unique nature of her job and what you're making possible...



Antoinette, MQI Young Person's Support worker

She is, it seems, a mix of opposing qualities. Empathetic. Accepting. Yet completely no nonsense. For the homeless 18-25 year olds she's entrusted to help, MQI Young Person's Support Worker Antoinette is perfect for the role.

When time matters most

Because of your donations Merchants Quay staff are able to invest as much time as it takes to move people on from homelessness and addiction.

However with young clients, Antoinette explains that she must move quickly. "I tell them, 'Look, this is your life. If we don't do the work now, you are going to get entrenched. Let's look at what's going on for you.'"

There and then

This early intervention makes a big difference. So by a client's second appointment, Antoinette is pushing for them. "From January to just June of this year I worked with over one hundred young



What "Welcome" Means to Me

Staff like Darren (left) and David (right) always welcome clients when they check in at MQI's open access centre. "I enjoy working the reception desk because it's the first point of contact for our clients. It's amazing to see after a certain amount of time that clients will walk in the door with a thumbs up and a how are you getting on?" David explains. Darren

nods in agreement, and adds "A lot of the clients are dealing with negativity every day because of their situation. A smile when they come in here can lift their spirits." ■

At Merchants Quay Ireland, you are part of every welcome. And countless lives are better for it. Thank you.

people. Sometimes I'm booked up for nearly a week. We jump in rapidly, 'Let's get you in somewhere, we'll get you a roll on bed. Are you interested in doing a course? Let's do the referral.' We do it there and then, not wait around weeks and months. But it's their plan, their choice, and making them understand I can't do it on my own without them. That is a vital thing I teach them."

Every teaching moment

There are more teaching moments as well. "Every day there's someone new," Antoinette says of the rising numbers of young people she's seeing. "They can't

believe they ended up in a homeless service. We've had people that are training to be nurses, and do engineering. So in addition to my work here I go to schools or I speak with the Garda Liaison, to teach people that homelessness can happen to anybody."

The stories you don't hear

She is as matter of fact with her young clients as she is about sharing the stories you don't always hear. "I'd one girl that I thought would never get through this life. Addiction can take over quicker than they actually see it coming. She overdosed more than

once. But she's now a mother of her own child and is doing really, really well. It's brilliant. A lot of hard work went into that."

Today Antoinette's awareness around homelessness has gotten to a level where, she confides, "I actually surprise myself. Working at Merchants Quay opened my eyes to what's really going on in this country. Nobody asks to get caught up in addiction and homelessness. What our donors are doing is something that's badly needed. Without their funding, some of these young people would never get a chance to make changes. It's a gift our supporters are giving them." ■

Young Person's Support at MQI is 100% donor-funded and donor protected as a direct result of generosity like yours. Thank you for this amazing gift.

Getting your financial house in order —

When You Make Your Will, Would You Consider a Gift for Ireland's Homeless?

As 2017 draws to a close, and the seasons change again, thoughts often turn to organising personal affairs. If you are planning to get your own financial house in order, you can remember the work of Merchants Quay Ireland with a simple gift in your will to:

- Ensure all your loved ones are looked after first
- Reduce your estate taxes (including your home)
- Remain anonymous if you wish it
- Help here at home for those who need it most

For more about how to include a gift of any size to MQI in your will, ring Emma on 01 524 0965. Whether or not you choose to let us know you are leaving a bequest, she is happy to help you. Thank you for your kindness and consideration. ■



Autumn Help from Head to Toe:

Four More Ways Your Donation is Working

After hours alone on cold, wet footpaths, the practical supports your donations bring this autumn mean safety, survival, and simple human kindness to many:



26

Hot showers daily to warm cold bones and restore dignity



118

Changes of clean clothes weekly for people who carry their lives on their backs



1,762

Padded mats rolled out monthly for safe sleep in MQI's Night Café



150,000

On average, in a year, the amazing number of cups of tea your generous heart helps fund.

THANK YOU!

Your generosity is helping keep the lights on and the kettle warm for Ireland's most vulnerable this autumn. For every sigh of relief, for every smile of gratitude, thank you.

For the great good you do, we gather in thanks and celebration —



Christmas Gratitude Concert: Will You Join Us?

You, your family, and friends are cordially invited to this year's Christmas Concert and carol singing, accompanied by the Dublin Concert Band. It's an uplifting afternoon held each year to honour your generosity of heart for Ireland's homeless and hungry – we hope to see you there!



When: Sunday, 3rd December
from 3.30 to 5pm

Where: Adam & Eve Church,
4 Merchants Quay,
Dublin 8 (opposite the Four Courts)

RSVP: To reserve your free places, ring Emma on **01 524 0965**, or email **emma.murphy@mqi.ie**.
The more, the merrier!

For the dignity and humanity you bring to vulnerable lives all year, our Christmas songs will be for you. Thank you.

AT THE COALFACE

4 Questions With MQI Outreach Worker Gavin

For every man or woman who turns to Merchants Quay for help, there are still some who remain lost to the streets. And for these people, entrenched and alone in homelessness, there is Gavin...



Gavin, of the assertive outreach your donations helped initially support, pictured on the job with training intern Shannon. “The idea is to go into the streets and engage with people who mightn’t necessarily be accessing any service at all – let alone Merchants Quay,” he says. “They may have got turned away from every other service. We help them to know they are welcome at MQI.”

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

I wish they could see the amount of work that goes on behind Merchants Quay’s door, and the type of services they help to fund. Their generosity is having a huge

impact on our client group, and we’re getting great results. The smallest thing could be success, you know? Even if it’s getting off the streets after being in chronic addiction, that’s a huge thing for somebody. I’d say thanks a million, and if you’re able, please keep up the support.

What do you love most about being part of the MQI team?

The people we help, they really need a hand up. So to be able to do that for somebody, to see how much they appreciate the work we are doing, it’s really powerful. I don’t think any of us could do what we do if it wasn’t for the whole team. And there is a momentum that builds, it changes people. They may have got turned away from every other service. We help them to know they are welcome at MQI.

What is one of the saddest parts of your work doing street outreach?

When you stop hearing someone’s name, and then you hear that they’ve passed away. I’ve had a few clients I was working with for months and months, helped them along, and they’ve passed away. These are some of the hard pieces of my work. You know there are going to be setbacks along the way, but it’s hard to see people falling.

Going forward, what do you see as the biggest challenge?

Appropriate accommodation and move-on options for people. It might seem there’s a lot of hostels, but with the housing crisis and so many coming into homelessness now, it’s really pushing our clients to the bottom of the list. ■



For As Long As I Live...

continued from cover

helped me. No one was opening the door, but Merchants Quay did. They let me in, they gave me a cup of tea, gave me breakfast for free, offered needle exchange. They let me stay at the Night Café and they were always nice to me."

Life after St. Francis Farm

It was Merchants Quay's in-prison counselling and referrals that brought Luke to St. Francis Farm. Slowly, the drugs left his system. More work helped him deal with his past. He transitioned into Aftercare, and MQI's day programme, a service he calls "invaluable. The group therapy, the one to ones, I can't say enough about it." He keeps in touch with staff to this day.

Picture Luke not two autumns ago. On the streets or headed to prison. Suffering. Ashamed of what he'd done and who he'd become, written off as a hopeless case if not for people like you to open a door. And Luke, for one, will never forget your kindness. "I'm going to an Aftercare tonight that we're running. Merchants Quay turned my life around. For as long as I live I will do whatever I can to give back, forever." ■

Thank you for giving men and women like Luke a way out of addiction and homelessness. Today, and forever.

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 summer address labels... ring us. We are delighted to send you a sheet (or more!) of labels, free with our warmest compliments, personalised for your Christmas post.

Then while you're sending glad tidings of the season, you'll save time addressing and help more as well: the labels cost pennies to print yet create national awareness for Ireland's most vulnerable. **For your labels, ring Emma on 01 524 0965.**



Help restock Riverbank homeless centre

AUTUMN Wish List

When autumn winds blow, and rain falls cold and grey, your gifts of these much needed items will brighten the most difficult day:

- Bath towels for our rough sleepers to come in for a hot shower
- Shampoo and shower gel (always in short supply!)
- Warm, waterproof jackets to protect them from the elements
- Hats, scarves, and gloves for the cold months ahead
- Men's jeans (all sizes)
- Track pants (men's 30-32" waist, women's small/medium)

Drop off your items in person to MQI at 24 Merchants Court between 9:30am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Or if you live in Dublin and can't come to us, we'll come round to see you with the MQI photo album and collect your donated items – **ring Emma on 01 524 0965 for details.**

Thank you!



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

Merchants Quay Ireland
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:** info@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.