

Quay Times



The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland | Autumn 2011

Families of Addiction: A Mother's True Story

The silent suffering of the "families of addiction" is one of the most devastating sides of drug use in Ireland today. And without help, the problems they face can rip even the best of families apart.

See through a mother's eyes to know the incredible difference your support of Merchants Quay is making for Noreen (not her real name) and her family...

Noreen begins, "I used to think my son was drunk. He was only 15 – but I could never smell the drink off him." The day she found a syringe on the floor of her son's bedroom, everything changed for Noreen and her family.

Concerned her son might be sick, she took the syringe to the chemist. "I'll never forget the shock," Noreen recalls. "He said my son was using the needle to inject heroin. I thought, 'This

couldn't be happening to my child!' I can't even remember walking home."

Fearful Thoughts Flooded Noreen's Mind

If you received our letter several weeks ago you may remember Noreen's story. Her shame and despair. Her feeling of isolation. Her anger and fear.

Were there drugs in her home? What if the Gardaí came? What
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"Before I came to MQI's Family Support Services, I actually was afraid of addicts, to be honest with you. Before I knew my child was a drug user if I saw an addict on the ground I'd just walk around. But then when I came to Merchants Quay I realised, they're someone's children! My son, he's my son, and I reared him, and I saw the good side of him."

Team Deloitte, you're delightful!

Volunteer Painters Give Open Access a Facelift

On a dreary, drizzly September day, more than fifty volunteers from the professional firm Deloitte arrived at MQI to make everything warm and bright. The team was all smiles as they brought in buckets of paint and loads of supplies, and in less than six hours they repainted not only the Drop-In Centre but the Health Promotion Unit, too!

Team Deloitte, thank you for the refreshing facelift to MQI's dining room, client contact rooms and reception. Your generosity brightened our walls... and our spirits!



Painters for a day: volunteers from the audit and advisory firm of Deloitte are all smiles after giving Open Access a fresh coat of paint.

Breaking the Silence: Family Support Services with Will and Celia

Something remarkable happens each week across Ireland, because of you. Family members gather to "break the silence" – to discuss the very real, and often terrifying, issues of living with an addict, whether it be to drugs or alcohol or another type of dependency. In this article Will Carroll and Celia Bullard, co-facilitators of MQI's Family Support in Dublin, share a behind the scenes look at what families of addiction go through, and how the Family Support at MQI is helping...

What if you found out that someone in your family was addicted to drugs or alcohol, or having any kind of dependency issue? What would you want to know? Where would you go for support? Seventeen years ago, your answer would have been, "There's nowhere for me to go."

Celia Bullard remembers what those days were like. A volunteer with MQI since 1995, she recalls, "Before Merchants Quay's Family Support Services, there was nothing for anyone. Parents had nowhere to go – they didn't know anything about drugs until they discovered their child was using drugs. They were living with the problem and not living with it very well, either."

At Last, A Way to Cope

One of the original co-facilitators of Merchants Quay's first Family Support meetings more than sixteen years ago, today Celia is joined by Will Carroll, an MQI project worker who co-facilitates the weekly Family Support meetings in Dublin. He describes the role of Family Support at Merchants Quay, saying, "When it comes to living with addiction, the



"We always finish off with a bit of a laugh at the end of each meeting. Some of what's discussed here is very heavy, and you need to go home relaxed." – Will Carroll and Celia Bullard, co-facilitators of MQI's Family Support Services in Dublin

parents and other family members don't have a choice. So many's the time they're extremely ignorant about what types of drugs, where to get help, how to get help. What we at Family Support try to do is offer them a way that they can get that help, and cope with the problem within their own family."

Overcoming Addiction's Shame and Stigma

The first role of Family Support is to help parents overcome the shame and the stigma (see "Families of

Addiction" on page 1 for one mother's story). Will explains, "There's a huge stigma in finding out that your son or your daughter is involved with drug taking – there's a huge shame. So the shame leads to silence. And this leads to more problems, so the family can start turnin' in on itself. What we offer them is that first of all, they can come in and feel they're not alone – that there's help there for them. It's important that the drug user doesn't break up the family."

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Both Celia and Will agree it's critical that families seek expert help like the kind provided by Merchants Quay. "The issues that families of addiction deal with are extremely serious and wide-ranging as well. From siblings in the family who may also turn to drugs, to intimidation from drug dealers, to havin' to ask the drug user to leave the family home," Will notes.

A Trusted Place for Practical Advice

He continues. "The advice Celia and I will give is fact-based advice that we know to be true, the likes of the damages done by the drugs, the type of drugs, where they can seek help for it. It's completely confidential. We talk about healthcare issues, and how the family can protect themselves against HIV or hepatitis. We may deal with abuse issues as well. So we can link the family in with a good agency. Or if a mother comes in and tells us her son wants to go into rehab, we can get the paperwork for High Park or St. Francis Farm."

One terrifying issue is intimidation – where the family are forced to pay money to drug

dealers. "The first time it happens," Celia says, "automatically the parents pay off. The dealer presents himself at the door saying, 'Johnny owes me a thousand.' It's a case of, oh, he might be shot. Preying on their fears."

It's here that the other members of the support group are invaluable, by sharing what worked for them. Will expands on this, noting, "When people first come into the group, they think that they're the only family having to deal with addiction. And then they come into

"Nobody knows what drug abuse is like until it hits you. None of us would ever wish that our child would end up using drugs. And when it does happen, it's the policeman knockin' on your door and saying he's searching your house. All of a sudden your world is in turmoil."

— Will Carroll,
MQI project worker and
Family Support Services co-facilitator

the group and they listen and they learn from other families who have coped, they pick up tips."

Support During a Mother's Darkest Days

For one mother, Family Support was there through the worst of all tragedies. "She lost her son at 19 from a mix of drugs, mostly heroin. She found him one morning; he just couldn't cope. On a practical level, we linked her in to help with funeral services." But Will says it was the strength of the group members as a whole that got her through emotionally. "As a peer-led group, we depend on the other members of the group to interact with each other. That's where the learning is."

Note: There are approximately 20,000 heroin users in Ireland, each with a family of his or her own – multiplying the suffering from drug use by two, three, four or more people. To the nearly 300 families who were able to rely on Family Support Services at Merchants Quay Ireland last year, you brought practical help, and thanks to the support network, new hope.

You are always welcome at Merchants Quay Ireland:

"Just Look for the Purple Door..."

Where can you give to MQI in person? Meet the staff? Enjoy a tour? Come to the purple door! Merchants Quay is located at 28 Winetavern St directly across from Dublin City Council and open from 9am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Ring the buzzer at the purple door and come to Reception on the first floor. Or ring ahead on 01 524 0139 to let us know you'll be stopping in. Either way, we're happy to welcome you!



...A Mother's True Story

(continued from front page)

would her neighbours think? She'd always done her best by her boys. How could she help them now?

Like thousands of parents across Ireland, Noreen knew almost nothing about drug use or needles or heroin or addiction. She felt lost. And that wasn't the worst of it.

Noreen would soon discover that her oldest son, aged 18, was also using drugs. (This is a common problem faced by families of addiction, see "Breaking the Silence" on page 2.) She sought out a family support group near her home saying, "I wanted to talk about me problems, what's going on in the house."

But the group wasn't at all what Noreen expected. They told her to throw her youngest son, who was the most chaotic, out of the home. "I just couldn't," Noreen confesses. "What was I to do? He was only fifteen."

Through the Fire, for Her Son

Years pass. Noreen, her son – and her family – are living a life she never would have wanted. Money disappears from the home, as her son robs to feed his addiction. In all, he attempts detox seven times.

But, powerless to stop, her son always returned to drugs. "He took everything and anything," Noreen remembers. "He'd be crying to me in the kitchen, he'd be so full of remorse. He wanted to get well...it was horrible to see your child like that, you know, crying and not being able to help himself and can't get out of this net that he was caught in."

Finding New Hope and Strength

Noreen began coming to MQI's Family Support Services, where she found the coping skills – and the knowledge she needed about drug use – to hold her family and herself together. "Before I came to MQI's Family Support Services, I actually was afraid of addicts, to be honest with you. Before I knew my child was a drug user if I saw an addict on the ground I'd just walk around. But then when I came to Merchants Quay I realised, they're someone's children! My son, he's my son, and I reared him, and I saw the good side of him."

After an eight-year battle with heroin, her son – who ultimately turned to MQI for help with his addiction – is now totally drug free. Linking in with the counsellors at Merchants Quay, Noreen says, "really helped him. They eased a lot of the pain he was carrying. That was the breaking point for him. Today he has his own home and a job, I'm so proud of him."

Like in many families, Noreen's oldest son is still using drugs. She

About Family Support Services:

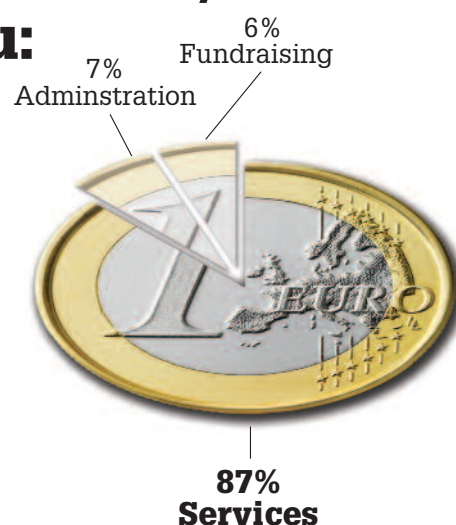
Your donations to MQI enable Family Support to meet weekly in Dublin, Laois, Longford, Westmeath and Offaly. Meetings are open to and attended by family and extended family members from all walks of life. Last year, nearly 300 people were helped through this confidential service. For more information, see "Breaking the Silence" on page 2 – or to attend a meeting, call 01 524 0160.

still relies on MQI's Family Support for help and advice today, saying "Now I can talk it through with him, and give him his options. When he's ready, he knows where Merchants Quay is. You can come down here and you can just pour your heart out because you know it's all confidential – I don't know what I'd do without the Family Support here."

What A Euro Can Do, Thanks to You:

At Merchants Quay Ireland, fully 87 percent of every Euro you give translates directly into help for the homeless... food for the hungry... support for the families of addiction... and recovery for those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in us!



A lovely lunch, fresh air, and a face-to-face chat with those you're helping — **MQI Supporters Enjoy a Sunny Day on the Farm**

UPDATE on St. Francis Farm's Open House: Thank you to all who attended! On 24 September, more than sixty Merchants Quay supporters travelling from as far as County Dublin spent a sunny day at St. Francis Farm in Tullow. After enjoying a cup of tea, small groups toured the farm and the new buildings while chatting with CEO Tony Geoghegan, staff and rehabilitation clients from both the Farm and High Park. Then it was off to the new dining room for tea and sandwiches...

Thanks to your kind donations, the renovated rehabilitation and new detox units are now fully furnished – with the first clients receiving a long awaited chance at a drug free life. Running costs for the Farm will be approximately €500,000 year on year, so if you'd like to get involved

with helping men and women move on from addiction, there are still many ongoing opportunities to help.

If you missed the Open House but want to visit St. Francis Farm, we welcome both individuals and civic, youth or senior groups for pre-arranged tours. To schedule, please ring us on 01 524 0115.



What Supporters Had to Say About Their Day

“The first thing was the staff here. They are very friendly and very open. Everything is being done so well – the whole construction and the horticulture and the agriculture. And the tour...the tour was terrific!”

– John and Pam T.

“I found it interesting to talk with someone who had been here for fourteen weeks. He told me about how well the leaders cope with clients' difficulties, and are patient and understanding and accepting of where they're at.”

– Joan P.

“I met a group of the lads here [clients] and they were a very nice bunch – one said it's his first day. I hope people appreciate what a fabulous place this is, and can give some money toward it.”

– Kenneth H.

“Norah [the farm manager] was great showing us the gardens and the stables. We were very impressed by the woodturning and woodcarving, and the hens and the turkeys. In fact I think the whole place is wonderful!”

– Julian M.

“This is a great place, the brightness of it and the confidence of it. We could nearly take a room here ourselves! The people who have been here and are here, it's great. It's a revelation.”

– Joe P.

“The first thing I noticed was the warm welcome. I didn't expect it to be like this, it's just a haven of peace. It's been brilliant.”

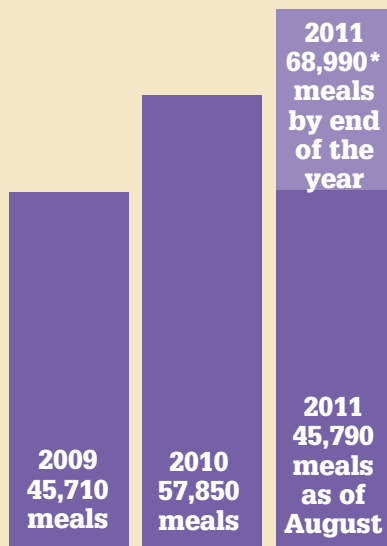
– Brenda F.

Your kindness means the world.

Life's basics now out of reach for many: **Hunger on the Rise in Ireland**

When MQI's 2010 Annual Review was released on 30 September 2011, it revealed increasing demand across virtually all of Merchants Quay's services, from primary healthcare (up fourteen percent) to needle exchange (up five percent).

But the number of meals that MQI served to the homeless and to those now struggling to feed themselves and their families showed one of the largest increases of all – up more than a quarter over 2009 – a stark trend projected to continue into 2012.



*this total includes the new evening service



Hugh McKenna, OFM and MQI Chairman, Róisín Shortall, Minister of State for the Nat'l Drugs Strategy, and CEO Tony Geoghegan at the release of MQI's latest Annual Review. To download your free copy, please visit our website at www.mqi.ie, or ring us on 01 524 0160 to request a print version.

Every Tuesday starting in December:

Announcing Free Hard Hat Tours of the New Riverbank

As a loyal supporter, you are cordially invited to join us in Dublin for free "hard hat tours" of the new Riverbank Centre – a fantastic new development project that could not have come through the initial phase without the support of the Franciscan Fraternity and the many caring donors and benefactors who support our work.

When completed, Riverbank will at last bring many of our most critical, frontline services such as meals, primary healthcare, needle

exchange and family support under one roof – and back to the Merchants Quay neighborhood. This is a vital move because crisis-oriented services will be where they are most needed.

We'd love to give you an inside glimpse. **Tours are held on the first Tuesday of every month starting in December.** We provide the hard hat... so to reserve your slot simply ring us on 01 524 0139. See you soon!

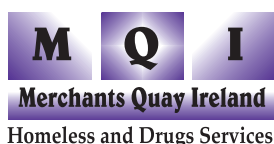


Christmas Comes Early! Your Gift Doubles Now Thru 31 Dec:

MQI are thrilled to announce that a generous long-time supporter is extending the **€50,000 Christmas Matching Challenge** to you once again this year. Every gift you give to Merchants Quay Ireland from 1 November through 31 December 2011 will automatically double up to €50,000 at no extra cost to you.

Please watch your post: more details coming soon. Or give now, and your kindness will double for those in need this Christmas. Thank you!

To Make Your Gift by Phone: Please ring us on 01 524 0139.



Merchants Quay Ireland
P.O. Box 11958
28 Winetavern Street
Dublin 8

Head Office: 01 524 0160
Fundraising: 01 524 0139
Volunteering: 01 524 0128

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