

# Simon & Me

Cork Simon Community  
Annual Report 2011



ould  
n to  
ll  
me.”



The cover of our Annual Report is an illustration by Keri O'Leary, a second year student at St. Aidan's Community College, Dublin Hill, Cork. Keri's illustration was chosen from 136 entries from six secondary schools throughout Cork. It was part of a pilot project to design the cover of our Annual Report. The project will be extended to all secondary schools from September.

St. Aidan's Community College teachers, Yvonne Lee and Gemma Tierney, supervised the pupils' artwork.

The pilot project is part of a wider programme of activities in the education sector. Using a variety of tools, activities, education packs and projects, students participate in building their awareness of homelessness; in many cases there are opportunities for students to be actively involved in tackling homelessness.



"He is a toy who was once loved and has been disregarded – he is sad and no one wants him and this too can happen to homeless people. People don't pay them much attention. A toy can be cast away as can people in society but Cork Simon are there to help people get back on their feet.

It is a little like the concept of the 'Toy Story' movie where Woody is no longer loved or needed by the child who once loved him."

Keri O'Leary

A selection of the entries can be viewed at [www.facebook.com/CorkSimon](http://www.facebook.com/CorkSimon)

"I owe my life to  
Cork Simon. I could  
never say enough to  
thank them for all  
they've done for me."

Peter is a proud and independent man. A builder by trade, he has worked hard all his life. Right up until the day ill health forced him to stop.

## Chair's Report

2011 was not just a milestone year for Cork Simon Community; it turned out to be a year of milestones.

We marked our milestone 40th anniversary in 2011 – forty years of people from all walks of life coming together, believing in people, reaching out to those less fortunate, isolated and vulnerable, and helping to make sure they have a place in our society – valued and acknowledged.

---

### **WE SAW THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING AT CORK SIMON IN ITS FORTY YEAR HISTORY – OVER ONE THOUSAND PEOPLE.**

---

In 2011 we reached another milestone in addressing long-term homelessness in Cork by bringing three new beds on stream in our High-Support house on Boreenmanna Road. Clannmornin House welcomed three people to their new home – people who were long-term homeless in our Emergency Shelter. It brought the number of residents at Clannmornin House – Cork Simon's first High-Support house, to eleven people with no additional running costs.

Despite the times we are in, we continued to see a fall in the number of people having to sleep rough. A record low of thirty eight people were recorded as sleeping rough on

at least one night in 2011 – a fall of 27% on the previous year. We moved quickly to ensure that each person had access to an emergency bed. We continued to work with other providers in the city to ensure that we continued to have enough emergency beds in Cork so that no one had to sleep rough.

We saw the highest number of people volunteering at Cork Simon in its forty year history – over one thousand people were involved as volunteers in every aspect of Cork Simon's work, giving up their time, sharing their skills and bringing an energy and vitality to the Community.

We appointed a new CEO – Dermot Kavanagh, a Cork native, who brought with him a wealth of experience in the homelessness sector from his time with Merchant's Quay Ireland.

We saw out our 2008-2011 Community Plan, A Better Life, A Better World, Creating Pathways for Change. Despite the ever increasing economic challenges, we achieved much of what we set out to do four years ago. We brought much needed new services on stream; we ensured that the majority of residents at our Emergency Shelter moved quickly to more secure housing; we saw people's health improve; we made activities and employment supports part of the mix of supports for people working towards leaving

Pete  
ind  
bui  
has w  
life.  
until t  
for

homelessness behind them; we saw more volunteers become actively involved; we increased our fundraising income and we put in place strong governance and financial management. In short, we weathered the economic storms and made tremendous progress in tackling homelessness in Cork.

We reached each and every one of these milestones in our milestone year by working together, staying focused and rising to the challenges. Everyone in the wider community played their part. Literally thousands of people from all walks of life donated money, organised fundraisers, volunteered, took part in events, shared and supported our goals in whatever way they could. The business community got behind us and, despite their own challenges, did not ignore the needs of their local community; they supported corporate fundraisers, and supported their staff to fundraise and volunteer. We continued to work with government agencies and the local authorities who all recognised the need to maintain the momentum in tackling homelessness despite ever decreasing budgets.

That generosity, commitment and support are what helped us make progress when all else was in retreat. It's what helped us to be there for people who had no where else to turn. It's what helped so many people to turn their lives around. Thank you for believing in Cork Simon and

for believing in people. Those milestones are now behind us as we look to the road ahead. We spent much of 2011 developing our 2012-2015 Community Plan: Home. Health. Hope... Making Progress in Tough Times. Our goal is to make progress in eliminating long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Cork. Reaching those milestones won't be easy, but not impossible. We can continue making progress by continuing to work together, by continuing to believe in people.

---

**OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE PROGRESS IN ELIMINATING LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS AND THE NEED TO SLEEP ROUGH IN CORK.**

---

The commitment and generosity of the people of Cork to tackling homelessness must be both matched and acknowledged by government; not ignored or taken for granted. We must have access to more housing – flats with visiting support, sheltered housing and high-support housing. It's the only way to make sure people can move quickly from emergency accommodation to more secure housing – and better quality of life, and to actively tackle long-term homelessness. We must at least maintain current levels of supports for people working towards leaving homelessness behind them and to develop a comprehensive approach to drug and alcohol use and addic-

tion related needs. We can and will make progress in reaching these milestones with commitment and support from government to match what people in Cork are already contributing.

We have many more miles to walk and many more milestones to reach. As Nelson Mandela once said, "It always seems impossible until it's done". We've achieved the impossible in the hardest of times by working together, being determined and believing in people. I believe we can continue to do so. Thank you for your generosity and for being part of Cork Simon Community.



Dave Ronayne,  
Chair, Board of Directors,  
Cork Simon Community.

The doctors told him that he had been diagnosed with a serious, life-threatening heart condition, and that he would have to give up work.



“I’ve worked my whole life. Ever since I left home when I was 19, I’ve always kept my hands busy at something. Then suddenly at 55 years of age, I’m told I can’t work.”

## CEO's Report

When I returned to Cork last September to take up my post as CEO at Cork Simon Community, I was very aware that we are living in tough times and that as the great recession has progressed, each year more and more people have been living at the edge of homelessness and many have fallen over the edge. Last year Cork Simon worked with 154 people who had never needed our services before. Despite this I was impressed to find that so much had been achieved in Cork through a combination of effective partnership between ourselves, the city council, the HSE and the other voluntary providers, and the people and businesses throughout Cork who have all demonstrated their generosity, commitment and sheer determination in tackling homelessness.

We really have made progress in tough times. We have developed solutions that work.

The vision of successive national homeless strategies has been to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough. Here in Cork interagency cooperation has helped ensure that rough sleeping is now reduced to the point where there are nights where nobody has to sleep rough. And when someone is sleeping rough every effort is made to ensure it is for the minimum time possible. A proactive outreach team that encourages people to avail of shelter beds, or even to move directly from street to home, coupled with a

flexible approach that seeks to include and address rather than exclude and ignore those with the most challenging needs, enables each person to come indoors as quickly as possible and get any health and related supports they may need.

---

**WE NEED YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER. THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT NEED YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER.**

---

The record low number of people sleeping rough in Cork in 2011 can be mapped side by side with the increase in housing options we have developed along with the barriers to housing that we have removed. We have offered housing as a right rather than as a reward. We have included those who were previously excluded. Where people have problems with physical health, mental health or addiction we have offered support, encouragement and access to treatment rather than requiring health and sobriety before allowing access to housing. This is what housing first means.

The majority of people living in Cork Simon's five high-support houses would previously have been categorised as entrenched rough sleepers. Just under half of those living in their own individual flats supported by Cork Simon's Housing Plus team would also have fallen into this category. Many were barred from all services at one time or

“I’ve w  
life  
home  
I’ve  
han  
thing  
at 55  
to

another. With the right supports in place, the housing first approach works.

None of that progress would have been possible without you. Most impressive of all are the thousands of people throughout Cork and beyond that have been standing side-by-side with Cork Simon, through thick and thin, helping to ensure that we can walk with people along every step of their journey out of homelessness, for as long as they need us. Over eight thousand of you – generous donors, active volunteers and responsible businesses, have been key to the progress that we have made. Thank you for all that you’ve done – and continue to do.

We need you now more than ever. The people we support need you now more than ever. Progress on rough sleeping has not been matched by progress on long-term homelessness. Too many people are stuck in emergency accommodation for over six months because they have no other option. This is a growing problem in Cork. The longer people remain stuck in emergency homeless services, the poorer their physical and mental health becomes. We have also noted a big increase in the number of women using our services over recent years. The number of women using our Emergency Shelter has increased by 63% since 2008. The number of women long-term homeless has increased three-fold in the same period. Many people from new

communities who found work in Ireland in the good times have found themselves homeless in hard times and ended up destitute. The number of younger people – 18 to 26 year olds, who are long-term homeless, has increased four-fold since 2008. We need to develop better responses to younger people and ensure they do not become entrenched in homelessness.

In all cases the solution to long-term homelessness is to provide stable housing with immediate access to all necessary supports. For those homeless the longest and with the greatest needs it involves the provision of long-term housing with supports to address multiple health problems, including disability. Those supports are essential if people are to have stable housing.

Finding appropriate housing remains our greatest challenge. But housing alone is not enough. Over the years we have developed an impressive array of supports for people who are homeless, or recently rehoused. These supports, including general and mental health, addiction, counselling, activities, employment and training, and social supports are far from secure. They must be at least maintained – and in some cases improved and expanded, if we are to maintain the progress we’ve already achieved together in Cork in tackling homelessness

What has been achieved by working together has been

phenomenal, particularly given the tough times we are experiencing. Thank you for the part you’ve played in helping make it happen. Our goal over the next three years is to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Cork. I look forward to working with you in pursuit of those goals; to working together to develop and implement creative, innovative solutions to homelessness, and, with your help, to make sure we are there for anyone who needs us, regardless of their history or life circumstances.



Dermot Kavanagh,  
CEO, Cork Simon Community.

As a self-reliant man, he had no one to fall back on for support. He had plenty of friends, but Peter was not the kind of man to burden others with his problems.

And so, he found himself in the kind of predicament that often leads to tragedy. He was sick. He couldn't work. He felt depressed.

#### \*Peter's Story

"I owe my life to Cork Simon. I could never say enough to thank them for all they've done for me." Peter, aged 60.

Peter is a proud and independent man. A builder by trade, he has worked hard his whole life. Right up until the day ill health forced him to stop. He's over sixty now. He's always been the kind of man who'd keep himself busy doing one thing or another - usually for someone else; the kind of man who would never ask anyone else for anything.

**POOR HEALTH IS A MAJOR FACTOR FOR ANYONE LIVING ON THE STREET. IN PETER'S CASE, HIS HEART CONDITION WAS THE MAIN CAUSE.**

Then one day over five years ago, while he was at work on a building site, he suddenly collapsed with searing chest pains. When he woke up later in hospital, Peter learned that he'd come close to death. But there was worse to come. The doctors told him that he had been diagnosed with a serious, life-threatening heart condition, and that he would have to give up work. He was devastated.

"I've worked my whole life. Ever since I left home when I was nineteen, I've always kept my hands busy at something. Then suddenly at fifty-five years of age, I'm told I can't work. I didn't know what to do with

myself. And on top of that I was terrified I was going to collapse and die at any moment."

Peter lived a simple life on his own in a small flat in Cork City. As a self-reliant man, he had no one to fall back on for support. He had plenty of friends, but Peter was not the kind of man to burden others with his problems.

And so, he found himself in the kind of predicament that often leads to tragedy. He was sick. He couldn't work. He felt depressed. He suddenly had more time on his hands than he knew what to do with. He was lonely and afraid. Perhaps inevitably, he began to drink heavily; partly out of a need to fill the time, partly out of a need to bury his fear.

Fortunately, it never became an addiction. But it certainly didn't help his situation. Without work or a source of income, he quickly ran out of money. He tried working again, but had another attack and ended up back in hospital.

Poor health is a major factor for anyone living on the street. In Peter's case, his heart condition was the main cause. When he could no longer afford the rent on his flat, he was evicted. And because of the proud independent streak in him, he simply couldn't bring himself to ask a friend or a relative for help.

\*Not his real name



And so  
self in  
dica  
lead  
was s

With nowhere else to turn, Peter became homeless.

“The first night was terrible. I slept in a skip round the back of a building site I knew. There were old carpets and curtains in it, so it didn’t seem too bad. But I felt lower than I’d ever felt in my life. A couple of nights later I was mugged. I woke up with this fellow going through my pockets. He punched me and kicked me a few times and told me to shut up; then he ran off with my wallet and my bag.”

Peter had lost literally everything: his health, his job, his home. All he had left were the clothes on his back.

“It’s hard enough being on the streets, but when you’re sick it’s worse. I was weak and sometimes I’d have trouble breathing. Some nights I’d go to sleep afraid that I’d never wake up. You get sicker and weaker. And you’re just an easy target for some people. They take advantage of you.”

Anyone of Peter’s age with a serious health condition is

extremely vulnerable on the streets. He could have collapsed at any moment with no one around to help him. Thankfully, someone Peter met on the street persuaded him to swallow some of his fierce pride and knock on our door.

Peter was very relieved to be off the streets with a roof over his head, but as it turned out, he was still far from being safe. Just a few weeks after coming to our Emergency Shelter, Peter had another turn, and collapsed suddenly. Fortunately, CPR is an essential part of Cork Simon’s staff training, and two staff members were on hand to help.

“I remember being out that day and feeling short of breath, so I went back to the shelter. I sat down on one of the sofas for a rest. The next thing, I just rolled off onto the floor and I was out. Two of the girls from Cork Simon saved me. It’s only thanks to them I’m not dead now. They kept me alive until the ambulance came. I owe my life to Cork Simon and those two girls.”

Despite this unfortunate setback, Peter eventually took a huge step forward. He moved to live in one of our High Support Houses, which he shares with five other people who are putting homelessness behind them. For Peter, keeping himself busy and being useful to other people is everything. And fortunately he’s found new ways to do that. He became the most helpful person in the house, and he started working part time in a nearby Community Employment Scheme - light work, which his doctor advised him is okay, but the most important thing is that he felt useful again, and he regained his sense of purpose in life.

Peter’s story shows how misfortune can lead someone, even someone as proud and independent as Peter, to become homeless. He still needs our support to continue building on the progress he’s made, and to complete his path back to independent living. Needless to say, Cork Simon will stick with him every step of the way.

---

PETER WAS VERY RELIEVED TO BE OFF THE STREETS WITH A ROOF OVER HIS HEAD, BUT AS IT TURNED OUT, HE WAS STILL FAR FROM BEING SAFE.

---

With nowhere else to turn, Peter became homeless.



“The first night was terrible, I slept in a skip round the back of a building site I knew. There were old carpets and curtains in it, so it didn’t seem too bad. But I felt lower than I’d ever felt in my life.”

#### Projects & Services in 2011

Cork Simon Community supported 621 people throughout 2011:

- 19% were women;
- 19% were under 26 years of age.

411 people stayed at Cork Simon’s 44 bed Emergency Shelter, which was full every night:

- 37% stayed at the Shelter for the first-time;
- 34% of first-time Shelter residents were under 26 years of age;
- 49% stayed for up to 7 days;
- 67% stayed for up to 30 days;
- 18% were long-term homeless – defined by the government as stays of over 6 months in emergency accommodation.

Long-term homelessness has been increasing steadily since 2008:

- 2008: 42 people
- 2009: 47 people
- 2010: 66 people
- 2011: 76 people

People who are long-term homeless tend to have multiple health needs, including disability.

38 people were recorded as sleeping rough on at least one night in 2011:

- 21% were women;
- 24% were under 26 years of age;

The number of people sleeping rough on at least one night in Cork has fallen consistently since 2008:

- 2008: 352 people
- 2009: 257 people
- 2010: 52 people
- 2011: 38 people

Cork still has enough emergency beds so that no one has to sleep rough. As soon as Cork Simon’s Outreach team becomes aware of people sleeping rough they are supported to come off the streets as quickly as possible.

70 people stayed at Cork Simon’s 5 High-Support houses in 2011 – an increase of 19% compared to the previous year:

- 93% required medical care;
- 59% required medical care for their mental health.

87 people were supported by Cork Simon’s Housing Plus team in Cork Simon, housing association and private rented flats:

- 17% were women.
- 11% were under 26 years of age.
- 23% were supported by the team for the first time.

61 young people (aged 18-26 years) were supported by Cork Simon’s Youth Homeless Drug Prevention Project.



## 40 Years of Volunteering

What started out as a handful of volunteers in 1971 has grown to over 1,000 active volunteers in 2011. As we marked our 40th anniversary, record numbers of people were volunteering at Cork Simon – a real demonstration of people believing in people.

Over 1,000 people demonstrated what community is all about: being aware of, and caring about, the welfare of fellow citizens, recognising that we all live as members of communities

and therefore depend on others in our daily lives. Over 1,000 active volunteers were involved in the Soup Run, in administration, in one-to-one mentoring at our houses and flats, in church gate collections and flag days, in literacy and numeracy classes, in organising countless fundraising events, in coaching and training, in a range of activities from arts & crafts to sport & recreation, in simply spending time with people who are isolated, alone and often forgotten.



“It’s hard enough being on the streets, but when you’re sick it’s worse. I was weak and sometimes I’d have trouble breathing. Some nights I’d go to sleep afraid that I’d never wake up.”



Peter's story shows how misfortune can lead anyone, even someone as proud and independent as Peter, to become homeless.

45 people – mostly in their twenties, came to us throughout the year from Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Moldova, New Zealand, Spain, Romania, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Ireland to volunteer full-time at all of our projects and services. They spent anything from six months to a year volunteering a full 40 hours a week. Many completed the specially designed DIT Certificate Course in Volunteering, which was delivered at Cork Simon; all took home with them life-changing experiences and life-long friends.

In a recent Volunteer Ireland survey, 98% of respondents said that volunteering makes them a happier person. The Chairperson of Volunteer Ireland wrote recently, "Volunteering is a way of taking control, of making a real positive impact in your community. We may not be able to directly change our economy, but we can always make a positive influence on our society."

Over 1,000 active volunteers at Cork Simon in 2011 made a hugely positive influence on society and more especially on the lives of people who would otherwise be forgotten. Another 500 people applied online and in person to volunteer – a phenomenal vote of support for people who are marginalised, isolated and vulnerable.

Interested in volunteering?  
Please visit [www.corksion.ie](http://www.corksion.ie)



## Financial Activities 2011

	Restricted Funds	Restricted Homeless Foundation Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Unrestricted Designated Funds	Total Available Funds	Restricted Building Fund	Total 2011	Total 2010
<b>Incoming Resources</b>	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Voluntary income	173,850	—	620,816	—	794,666	24,270	818,936	854,144
Bequests	—	—	402,209	—	402,209	40,000	442,209	136,460
Activities for generating funds	192,937	—	1,326,541	—	1,519,478	—	1,519,478	1,652,686
Incoming resources from charitable activities	3,829,930	—	340,138	—	4,170,068	—	4,170,068	4,190,463
Investment income and other	—	1,067	109,486	—	110,553	—	110,553	113,784
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>4,196,717</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>2,799,190</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6,996,974</b>	<b>64,270</b>	<b>7,061,244</b>	<b>6,947,537</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>								
Charitable expenditure homeless services	5,552,637	—	215,999	—	5,768,636	—	5,768,636	5,720,434
Cost of generating funds	—	—	709,719	—	709,719	—	709,719	618,357
Campaigning and research	—	—	174,035	—	174,035	—	174,035	150,510
Governance costs	—	—	43,000	—	43,000	—	43,000	42,950
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>5,552,637</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,142,753</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6,695,390</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6,695,390</b>	<b>6,532,251</b>
<b>Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources Before Transfers</b>	<b>(1,355,920)</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>1,656,437</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>301,584</b>	<b>64,270</b>	<b>365,854</b>	<b>415,286</b>
Capital Assistance Scheme Repayments relieved	—	—	335,119	—	335,119	—	335,119	324,730
Transfer from restricted building fund	—	—	25,725	—	25,725	(25,725)	—	—
Transfer from unrestricted fund	1,344,263	—	(1,544,263)	200,000	—	—	—	—
<b>Net Incoming Resources Before Other Recognised Gains and Losses.</b>	<b>(11,657)</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>473,018</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>662,428</b>	<b>38,545</b>	<b>700,973</b>	<b>740,016</b>
Gain in value of investments	—	3,988	—	—	3,988	—	3,988	2,410
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>(11,657)</b>	<b>5,055</b>	<b>473,018</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>666,416</b>	<b>38,545</b>	<b>704,961</b>	<b>742,426</b>

	2011	2010
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	€	€
Tangible assets	6,667,429	6,570,006
Financial assets — investments	462,246	457,191
	<b>7,129,675</b>	<b>7,027,197</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	40,000	—
Debtors	213,232	134,846
Cash at bank	3,546,876	3,243,772
	<b>3,800,108</b>	<b>3,378,618</b>
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due within 1 year</b>	<b>(891,369)</b>	<b>(1,038,517)</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>2,908,739</b>	<b>2,340,101</b>
<b>Total Assets Less Current Liabilities</b>	<b>10,038,414</b>	<b>9,367,298</b>
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due after one year</b>	<b>(5,144,051)</b>	<b>(5,177,896)</b>
	<b>4,894,363</b>	<b>4,189,402</b>
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>		
Unrestricted funds	3,140,515	2,667,497
Designated funds	830,000	630,000
Restricted income funds	—	11,657
Restricted Homeless Foundation funds	462,120	457,183
Restricted building funds	461,728	423,183
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>	<b>4,894,363</b>	<b>4,189,402</b>



**\*Joe's Story**

If you could have seen Joe when he first came to Cork Simon's Emergency Shelter you'd have been looking at a man who believed better times were a thing of the past.

As he puts it: "I couldn't understand it. I'd been in a relationship for fourteen and a half years. And I'd always had work. I just couldn't understand how this had happened to me."

For Joe, when the recession hit, everything fell apart. Joe was an alcoholic. While the money was good, he was just about able to hold things together. But his longstanding relationship with his partner, Ann was beginning to suffer. She knew Joe had a problem, but he wouldn't listen. As he saw it, he worked hard. And he drank hard. He didn't believe he had an alcohol problem until he found himself without work.

**WHY DID JOE SPEND SO MUCH TIME ON THE STREETS INSTEAD OF KNOCKING ON OUR DOOR? AS HE PUTS IT:**

**"I WAS TOO PROUD TO GO."**

"When the building work dried up I lost the plot. I went drinking all day. Even though I wasn't earning, what I had went over the bar. I didn't know how to go about claiming benefits - I'd never signed on in my life. All I'd ever done was work."

With no source of income, and his alcoholism taking all the money he had left for drink, it was only a matter of time before Joe's already strained relationship deteriorated beyond repair.

Things came to a head when Ann finally asked him to leave. Joe doesn't blame anyone but himself. But at the time, it was a huge shock to suddenly find himself with no job, no money and no home.

What happened next is a source of great shame to Joe. It's a period of his life that he would much rather forget...

"I was sleeping under bushes and inside old cars, any place where you could throw the head down for the night. I'll never forget the cold. The unbelievable cold. I went to sleep in a churchyard one night and when I woke up I couldn't move, I was so cold. The worst thing is when it rains, because you've no way of drying yourself or warming up. You go walking round town all day, purely and utterly freezing. You're wrecked tired, maggotsy dirty. You're avoiding people that you know because you don't want to be seen in the condition you're in. You live in the shadows, hiding in corners like some kind of criminal. You get so that you don't think there's much lower you can go. But unfortunately you reach a new low. There was a laneway ran alongside an old building in town and I used to sleep under a bush down there. One night

"I couldn't understand it. I'd been in a relationship for 14 and a half years and I'd always had work. I just couldn't understand how this had happened to me".

\*Not his real name



Things came to a head when Ann finally asked him to leave. Joe doesn't blame anyone but himself. But at the time, it was a huge shock to suddenly find himself with no job, no money and no home.

some fellas found me while I was sleeping. I woke up with them peeing on me. There's no way of getting rid of that. You're stuck with it. There are thoughts that will always stay with me."

Joe lived like this on the streets of Cork City for six weeks during a cold, harsh winter. During conditions like these health problems are a huge worry for anyone who's homeless. Influenza and pneumonia are much greater threats to people who are homeless than to other people. Those who are already ill frequently become much worse.

**THAT WELCOME CHANGED JOE'S LIFE. MAYBE IT EVEN SAVED IT. HE'S HAD HIS UPS AND DOWNS OVER THE LAST YEAR - BUT THINGS ARE REALLY LOOKING UP FOR HIM NOW.**

Why did Joe spend so much time on the streets instead of knocking on our door? As he puts it: "I was too proud to go."

"Eventually, I was marched down by a friend, because I was losing a lot of weight and looking pretty ragged. I was welcomed in by someone called Catriona. It was a great boost even just talking to her. All the insecurities I felt about myself and my situation went within the first hour of me being there. The thing I most remember is the first hot meal. I got this big

plate of spaghetti bolognese. Well, they must have been expecting me, because that's my favourite dish. It was a wonderful welcome."

That welcome changed Joe's life. Maybe it even saved it. He's had his ups and downs over the last year - but things are really looking up for him now. He's even given up drinking.

With the help of the tailored support structures that Cork Simon built around him, Joe has been turning his life around. The turning point came, ironically, in a pub in Cork City centre:

"It was the morning of the jazz festival. I was sitting on my own at the counter when I caught a look of myself in the mirror. I thought, 'There must be more to life than this.' I said, 'That's it, I'm leaving. I'm not drinking anymore.' I put a full pint down on the counter, walked out and I haven't drunk another drop since that day."

Shortly after this Joe discovered that he had diabetes. But he's never wavered from his resolve to stay off the drink. He's given up smoking too. And with Cork Simon's support, he's also found himself work.

Joe moved into one of our high support houses - where people live with full-time Cork Simon staff and volunteers on hand 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He still needs our help to stay

on track, and may do so for a while yet. But his life is really coming together, and of course, Cork Simon will be there for him every step of the way.

next  
eat  
s a  
e that  
uch  
et...

#### 40 Years of Cork Simon Community

A hand-printed book of poetry, a street mash-up, a cinema advert, the Big Four-O painting project, a time capsule, a music album and a new website were just some of the ways that we marked Cork Simon's 40th anniversary.

Big public events and small community get-togethers helped mark the 40 years that people in Cork have been digging deep

into their hearts and into their pockets, helping to make sure that those who are most vulnerable, most marginalised and most in need have somewhere to turn to when all else fails. Participating in events in the wider community means people who are homeless are no longer scorned or forgotten, but feel part of society, have a voice and feel valued, appreciated and understood.



What happened next is a source of great shame to Joe. It's a period of his life that he would much rather forget...



“I was sleeping under bushes and inside old cars, any place where you could throw the head down for the night. I’ll never forget the cold. The unbelievable cold.”



round  
ely  
ing.  
ired.  
people  
ecause  
o be  
ition



“I wa  
bush  
cars  
you o  
the  
for th  
forget

### My Soup Run Story

If there's one thing I've learned over the last few years on the Soup Run, it's that homelessness can happen to literally anyone, and at any given time in their lives. You never know what someone's story might be, why they're there, or what their friends or family might think is going on in their lives.

You'd be surprised.

We see people trying to keep up high appearances; women all dolled up. I remember one man in a suit, and if you'd walked past him on the street you'd think, "he has it all," but there he was at the Soup Run. There was one lad who told me that his mother still rings him every day thinking that he's still in work. Any of us could have friends or relatives living away from home, and you wouldn't know for sure what their life was like. A lot of people assume that the people we get on the Soup Run are all substance abusers or alcoholics - but it's not like that at all. I find that most of them are people who have simply fallen on hard times.

One night this guy came in who recognised me from home. We'd worked in the same hotel together. He told me he'd moved to Cork City for a hotel manager's job. When his girlfriend got pregnant, they bought a house and got a new car. They were so proud of their new life together.

Then the recession hit and he lost his job. Then in turn he lost the car and then the house. He split with his girlfriend. And she went back to live with her parents, so he lost contact with his child as well. And here he was homeless, but if you could look back at his life three years ago, you'd see a guy with a great job, a house, a girlfriend and a child. It's so sad. He's a lovely fella. That's how things can just turn for some people.

---

**YOU MIGHT SEE SOMEONE ONE NIGHT, AND NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN. A YOUNG MAN BROUGHT ME FLOWERS ONE NIGHT, AND THAT WAS THE LAST I SAW OF HIM.**

---

Another thing I've discovered over the last two years is that the Soup Run isn't just about people getting their dinners or a bit of soup. There are men and women out there that maybe have had no one to talk to all day. They come for a chat. And that one chat could be the only social interaction they get all day. I've had grown men crying on my shoulder. People telling me they were thinking about suicide, that they'd had enough. It's very hard when that happens. But you just have to do the best you can to encourage them that things will get better.

You might see someone one night, and never see them again. A young man brought me flowers one night, and that was

“You go walking round town all day, purely and utterly freezing. You're wrecked tired. You're avoiding people that you know because you don't want to be seen in the condition you're in.”

Why did Joe spend so much time on the streets instead of knocking on our door? As he puts it: "I was too proud to go"



the last I saw of him. Perhaps he'd found a way off the streets and that was his way of saying goodbye, and thank you. I like to think so anyway and then there are the times when you do see the impact you're having in people's lives - and that makes it all worthwhile.

One night I was out for a drink with my friends in a pub in Cork, and I spotted a guy who used to come to the Soup Run most nights. I hadn't seen him in seven or eight months, and he looked really well. I thought it might be a bit awkward for him if he recognised me, because

he'd obviously moved on, and the people he was with might not have known he used to be homeless. But he came over and said 'Hi', and brought me down to meet all his friends. He told them all about me and the Soup Run, and said how I'd helped him get his life back on track again.

I was delighted. He was always a lovely guy, and it was so great to see things working out for him so well, and to know that I'd played a small part in it. I was really happy for him.

And I guess that's the most important thing about the Soup Run. It's there for people when they need it, and for however long they need to get their lives back on track again. Without the Soup Run, turnarounds like these just wouldn't happen.

It really makes such a difference in people's lives.

Leanne Atkinson,  
Volunteer

the struc-  
Simon  
n, Joe  
g his





### 3 New High-Support Beds

In June 2011, Clannmornin House on Boreenmanna Road – one of Cork Simon’s five high-support houses – welcomed three new residents to its three new high-support beds.

High-support housing is appropriate for people who are very sick and vulnerable and who need high levels of round-the-clock care. It is part of the mix of housing solutions to homelessness, particularly suited to people who are long-term homeless who tend to have multiple health needs, including disability. The number of people long-term homeless in Cork has been rising steadily since 2008.

Originally an old farmhouse, Clannmornin House was Cork Simon’s first high-support house in 1971. It was demolished 20 years later, in 1991, and replaced with a single story,

eight-bed dwelling. The then President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, officially opened the new house. 20 years after that, as Cork Simon marked its 40th anniversary, the Minister for Environment, Community & Local Government, Phil Hogan TD, officially opened the three-bed extension, bringing the number of Cork Simon high-support beds to 47. Minister Hogan took the opportunity to also visit Cork Simon’s Emergency Shelter and meet some of the residents there.

These ministerial visits are important. They serve to emphasise that people who are homeless – people who are sick, vulnerable and often marginalised, have a place in our society; have needs that must be met and voices that must be heard. They serve to acknowledge the tremendous

contribution of a community of volunteers, donors and supporters in responding to homelessness; people playing their part, being active citizens, believing in people.

With the help of the tailored support structures that Cork Simon built around him, Joe has been turning his life around.

“It was the morning of the Jazz festival. I was sitting on my own at the counter when I caught a look of myself in the mirror. I thought, “There must be more to life than this””

#### What Lies Ahead

In the summer of 2011 Cork Simon started a 12 month process of developing its strategic plan for 2012 to 2015, Homes, Health, Hope... Making Progress in Tough Times.

The plan, which has just been finalised, has an overarching objective to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Cork.

There are some twenty goals, including the development of a comprehensive approach to drug and alcohol use and addiction related needs; better responses for younger people and women experiencing homelessness; ensuring that the needs

**WE PLEDGE THAT IF ELECTED TO GOVERNMENT WE WILL ENSURE THAT TACKLING HOMELESSNESS WILL BE ONE OF OUR TOP PRIORITIES.**

of people who are homeless and experiencing physical and mental health needs are addressed; and expanding people's opportunities for personal development, education, training, employment and occupation.

Achieving these goals requires that we make progress in the delivery of housing and services with the support of our partners. We cannot do it on our own. We need to maintain the involvement of over 1,000 active volunteers in every aspect of the community. We need to

maintain the support of over 6,000 generous donors. We need to maintain the resources necessary from government to help make it happen.

In March 2011, just before the General Election, all the political parties signed a pledge in our Emergency Shelter:

“We pledge that if elected to government we will ensure that tackling homelessness will be one of our top priorities.

We believe in people and pledge to work with all organisations to ensure that housing, healthcare and other supports are available to everyone at risk of or experiencing homelessness.”

Tackling homelessness as a priority means making more flats available with visiting support. It means putting more sheltered housing in place and it means adding to the existing pool of high-support housing for people who are long-term homeless with multiple health needs.

A range of appropriate housing - coupled with the necessary supports, will go a long way to helping eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Cork.

elp to  
d may  
yet.  
ally  
gether,  
rse,  
will  
every



### Board of Directors 2011

Joe Finnerty  
 Kevin Fitzgibbon  
 Catherine Anne Fitzpatrick  
 Edward Hogan  
 Eoin MacCuirc (Secretary)  
 Bernadette McGonigle  
 Carmel Mulcahy (Retired 13 June 2011)  
 John J Murphy  
 Tomás O'Callaghan  
 Dave Ronayne (Chair)  
 Brendan Ryan  
 Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan (Appointed 19 September 2011)

### Meetings Attended 2011

The Board of Directors met on eleven occasions throughout 2011:

Joe Finnerty	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Kevin Fitzgibbon	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Catherine Anne Fitzpatrick	1 2 3 4 5 6
Edward Hogan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<sup>1</sup> Eoin MacCuirc	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Bernadette McGonigle	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
<sup>2</sup> Carmel Mulcahy	1 2 3
Maureen Mullan	1 2 3 4 5
John J Murphy	
Tomás O'Callaghan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
<sup>3</sup> Dave Ronayne	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Brendan Ryan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<sup>4</sup> Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan	1 2

<sup>1</sup>Secretary. <sup>2</sup>Retired 13.06.11. <sup>3</sup>Chair. <sup>4</sup>Appointed 19.09.11.

He still needs help to stay on track, and may do so for awhile yet. But his life is really coming together, and of course, Cork Simon will be there for him every step of the way.

# Thanks for all the support.



Cork Simon Community is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee.

No. 42511  
Registered office:  
St. Nicholas House,  
Cove Street, Cork,  
CHY No. 9155

021 4321 051  
info@corksion.ie  
www.corksion.ie

 [www.facebook.com/CorkSimon](https://www.facebook.com/CorkSimon)  
 @cork\_simon

## Annual Report Sponsor

Thanks to Pepsico Ireland for their sponsorship of this Annual Report and for the commitment and support of their staff throughout the year. [www.pepsico.ie](http://www.pepsico.ie)



## Acknowledgements

Thanks to the professional services of:

John J Murphy Solicitors  
Pricewaterhouse Coopers  
AIB, Patrick Street, Cork

Thanks to the Simon Communities of Ireland for their continued support, and to the Simon Communities in Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, Midlands, Mid West, North West and South East. [www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie)

Thanks to Huguenot for their help and advice in the production of this annual report. [www.huguenot.ie](http://www.huguenot.ie)

Portrait photography by Richard Gilligan. [www.richgilligan.com](http://www.richgilligan.com)

Special thanks to our hundreds of volunteers and thousands of donors throughout the year who have all helped make a difference.

