

# Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland  
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

## Unlocking Aftercare's Door

*They came to MQI off Ireland's streets, homeless and chained to the world's most addictive drugs. Through the residential detox and rehab you fund, they are drug free for the first time in years. But there is one final door they need to pass through, and many say it is the most important of all...*



MQI staff chat about how aftercare housing helps clients transition at a fragile time in their lives.

**W**ith his warm face and ready smile, it's not hard to see why Merchants Quay Ireland's Ken O'Connor is spoken of so highly by the men and women who see him as pivotal to their remaining drug free.

But beneath his easy demeanour, O'Connor carries a heavy weight. "It's madness to think clients come out of our detox and drug-free rehab after all that work, and have nowhere to live or nowhere to go. If there was more accommodation for us to offer people – and long term units that we could house them

even after the short term, that would be my vision."

### Post-rehab home

He is talking about unlocking aftercare's door. And it's one instance of how incredibly hard your support works. Because thanks to you we have already been able to show that post-rehab housing is a remarkably wise investment.

For a handful of years staff like Ken O'Connor have placed a small number of homeless clients who complete MQI's rehab into two aftercare houses – one in Co Dublin, and another in Co Kildare. Each has a number of individual units centred on a communal space for cooking, meals, laundry and meeting.

### Wraparound care

In addition to the invaluable support network of living with

*(continued on page 2)*

## Because of You: Summer Relief

The foot-soaking basins are filled and clean shoes, fresh socks and cool water are being dispensed along with medical care and countless other tender mercies this summer because of your generosity to Merchants Quay. They'd be lost, without you. **Thank you!**



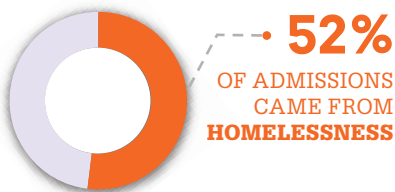
**Join us: Open Day at High Park, page 5**

# "I couldn't turn on a washing machine when

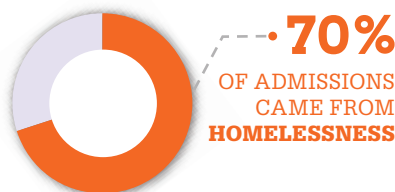
## Post-Rehab: The Housing Picture

Without aftercare transition housing, more than 5 out of every 10 clients who come to MQI's residential rehab are still homeless when they leave.

### HIGH PARK DETOX & REHAB CENTRE



### ST. FRANCIS FARM DETOX UNIT & REHAB CENTRE



## Aftercare's Door...

(continued from cover)

others working towards the same goals, MQI staff – including O'Connor – monitor every client closely. Weekly meetings and one to one key work sessions, along with participation in Merchants Quay Ireland's donor-funded day programmes add structure and wraparound support to each day.

### A vital transition

Since many are drug free after years of addiction, through MQI they also get help building literacy skills, seeking housing beyond aftercare, and in basics like learning how to save, budget and even fill out forms.

Clients view this 5- to 6-month

transition as something that's as vital as drug free treatment itself. Demand is so great – see sidebar at left – that the limited aftercare housing units can only be offered to people completing an MQI rehab. Even then, it's on a most urgent needs basis.

### Raw and daunting

Non-MQI options are daunting for post rehab clients. Some will try to return home if they had one.

O'Connor says this can be a bad move: "The family home may be one of the most dangerous places to return to. There could well be sexual abuse or substance abuse or even parental abuse." Due to lack of options, some must go back to hostels – where drug and alcohol use are pervasive. MQI

**"It's madness to think clients come out of our detox and drug-free rehab after all that work, and have nowhere to live or nowhere to go."**

– Ken O'Connor, Healthcare services coordinator at MQI

## My Aftercare Story: "Jack"

"People say the real test comes when you get out of treatment – and there's truth in that. After my detox and rehab at St. Francis Farm I was drug free for the first time since I was a teenager. Everything is just raw. I was homeless, I would have had to go back to a hostel without MQI. A lot of people don't have that help and they end up dead or back using drugs. The housing, aftercare and day

programmes are as vital as the treatment itself. And as well, having it all together. Constant support by the same people, it puts structure in your entire day. It's tough now finding my own little place, but I'm hoping to – and to go to college next year. I'd like to go into nursing. I think if you had the person here from over a year ago that went into treatment, I don't think you'd recognise him! MQI saved my life."



# When I came into aftercare. Now I live in my own

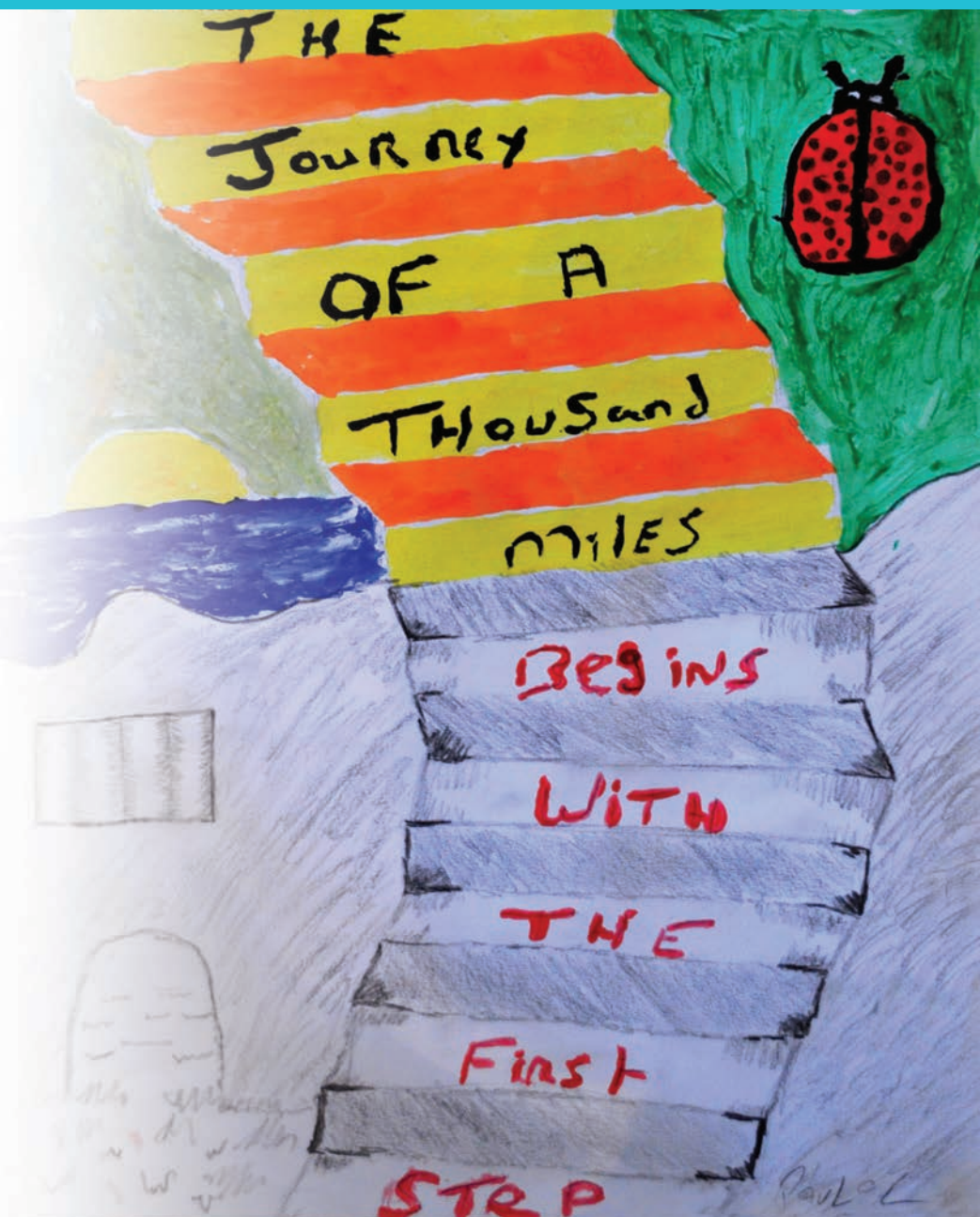
clients themselves are terrified to turn to hostels for fear of relapse at such a raw and fragile time in their lives.

## The lucky ones

Here lies O'Connor's heavy weight. "Our staff have done as much as we possibly can and clients put in all that work too. Then to fail some of them when it comes to the other end, it's an emotional, stressful time for us all. Those that do get a room, you know, are the lucky ones..."

The lucky ones know very well how blessed they are (stories pages 2-4) to have a safe place to rest their heads, post rehab. And we thank you for your extraordinary vision in entrusting Ken O'Connor – and all our MOI staff – to help those we can to unlock aftercare's door to a brighter tomorrow. ■

This artwork, created by a client who recently completed MQI's residential rehab, expresses the hope and vulnerability of men and women as they see the world through drug free eyes for the first time in years. It also underscores the need for post-rehab housing to help them transition.



## My Aftercare Story: "Clodagh"

"Trying to get housing is very hard. But I said, 'No way am I going into a hostel. I'm after doing all this work on myself at St. Francis Farm, and to go backwards, no.' I got the chance to go into MOI's Co Dublin House and day programme and I took it. I'm 11 months drug free! It's a big thing to have the support of the other people in the houses. There is a rota as well, weekly you have your day of cooking for the house and

your day of cleaning and your day to use the washing machine. When you are in active addiction you forget those things. You can ring Ken or Tara at any time, for talks and key work – Ken is spoken of highly all around the country. Now I'll stay in touch with MOI through group meetings on Thursday nights. I have been saving for my own place for me and my daughter. I'm starting a new chapter."



## Martin: Six Months On

*In the winter issue of Quay Times we introduced you to Martin, who was homeless and emerging from more than 20 years of drug addiction. Six months on, see how aftercare housing helped him...*



**W**hen your support helped Martin rehab at MQI's St. Francis Farm, he saw the world through drug-free eyes for the first time since the 1980s. But he had no home to return to.

"I was scared," he admits. "It's very hard to go directly from a treatment centre into society when you've been using drugs as long as I did. Left on your own you can easily do the wrong thing." Many clients face this problem (story page 1), and it's reflected in the fact that demand for MQI's aftercare houses in Co Kildare and Co Dublin outpaces capacity. So when we could offer Martin a room, he seized the chance. "Aftercare housing gave me a place to reintegrate into society. It keeps people safe."

Martin remains drug free today. He lives independently and is working regularly as a freelancer. He calls the structure and interconnectedness of the MQI services "a godsend. I really, really appreciated it."

"Even when I moved on it was Brian in aftercare who helped me find the place I'm in now. At the end of the day, I'm a Merchants Quay man!" And at the end of the day, we are grateful to you for making Martin's return to life possible.

**Thank you. ■**

*Read Martin's rehab story on [www.mqi.ie/news/quay-times-winter-2014-newsletter](http://www.mqi.ie/news/quay-times-winter-2014-newsletter). And learn about aftercare housing on page 1 of this newsletter.*

"I'm so glad for the options that were given to me. It takes time to get used to the real world without taking drugs – I wouldn't be drug free and back to working today without MQI."

## My Aftercare Story: "Oisín"

"It's when the drugs are gone out of you that it really starts. Hand on my heart I would be back to using drugs if I had gone back home. After my 17 week rehab at High Park I was lucky enough to get into MQI's housing programme, first at the house in Co Dublin then in Co Kildare because they asked me to be a role model for other clients. In my last weeks there I was actually in college, and the stress of housing

– it's hard. The landlords weren't accepting rent allowance, none of them. A bloke who'd been with me in hostels in the early days said, 'There is a bed tomorrow in the hostel.' It was down to that. I was blessed to get a flat that same day, and I'm living on my own now and in my second year of college for software and computer networking. Coming to MQI was the best decision I ever made."



# Each journey of hope has you at its heart.

## Coffee Mornings: A Preview Tour

*Preview what you'll see when you join us for Coffee Mornings at Riverbank, held regularly on Thursday and Saturday, in your honour...*

**H**ow do people end up at MQI's Riverbank homeless centre? And what really happens there? These are big questions. And they're exactly the questions we want to answer for you in a way that honours the dignity and privacy you give to

those you help, without ever knowing their names.

**It's why we invite you to Coffee Mornings** at Riverbank when the homeless centre isn't in active use. Two mornings each month, after our rough sleepers have gone from breakfast – and

while staff and volunteers are in training – Riverbank opens its door to you our donors, without whom we couldn't open at all.

**In the quietness we'll show you** the food kitchen where we expect to serve 90,000 meals this year. We'll show you where rough sleepers can have a hot shower and feel clean again. We'll show you the presses of warm towels, clean socks and underwear. The contact rooms where clients can sit in privacy with an MQI counsellor. The dental surgery where we fix the pain and embarrassment of rotten teeth. We'll introduce you to our nurse who tenderly dresses ulcers on legs and feet that walk miles each day.

**During the tour,** Coffee Morning guests are surprised to hear about the people who find the courage to change their lives at MQI's Riverbank – because here, thanks to your kindness, homelessness and addiction don't have to be a dead end. And that's worth feeling good about. ■

**Join us:** *We'd love to meet you, so bring a friend (or two!) to an upcoming Coffee Morning. See box below for details.*



“I was surprised by the range of support, and how spotless everything is!”

**SPECIALLY RESERVED, JUST FOR YOU:**

## Upcoming Tours & Open Days

**Coffee Mornings at MQI's Riverbank Centre,** held regularly in your honour... Saturday **26 July** and **30 August** at 11am, and Thursday **14 August** and **11 September** at 10:30am.



**Open Day at MQI's High Park residential rehab 20th September.** All welcome!



**Join us** for free refreshments and private guided tours: Ring Aislinn or Martina on 01 524 0139 to let us know which you'll attend, and be sure to bring an honoured guest (or two!).

# With profound gratitude, for all you do.

St. Francis Farm Open House, 2014 —

## Thank You for Sharing a Day on the Farm!

*On 24th May, Merchants Quay supporters travelled to Co. Carlow for our Open House at St. Francis Farm. Hear what they had to say about their day..*

“The physical standard of the houses, the accommodation and the facilities were most impressive as well as the devotion of staff and volunteers to your work. We look forward to a future return to the Farm.”

“[Our client tour guides] exuded pride in the veggies & herbs in the poly tunnels, and the chickens, pigs, ducks and turkey.”

“Everything about the detox and rehab section surprised me, especially the happiness of the clients. They are wonderful. Keep up the good work!”

“It made me realise that it requires great courage to start a new life without drug dependence, and of the follow up needed after St. Francis Farm.”



New website answers your toughest questions on Irish charities —

## “How can I tell what makes a charity good?”

Supporters of MQI often call us with queries about how Irish charities work – and we’re delighted to help you. Now a new website, developed by a handful of well-respected organisations, has answers to your frequently asked questions: **Visit [www.goodcharity.ie](http://www.goodcharity.ie)** today for open, honest answers on charity in Ireland.



**Merchants Quay Ireland**  
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To make your gift by phone: please ring us on 01 524 0139.

Head Office: 01 524 0160  
Fundraising: 01 524 0139  
Volunteering: 01 524 0128  
Email: [info@mqi.ie](mailto:info@mqi.ie)

Facebook: visit us for news and client interviews!



At MQI we respect everyone who comes to us for help – and many are working toward a fresh start in life. So while their stories are true, client names and images may have been changed to protect their privacy. Thank you for understanding.