

## You raise hopes and hearts all year round

### Now, it's our turn to raise the roof for YOU at the MQI Christmas Gratitude Concert

This Christmas the Dublin Concert Band are joining us once again to celebrate You and everything you do. Because you keep the doors at MQI open. You make it possible for people to access hot nutritious food, clean clothes and shower facilities along with medical care, dentistry, mental health services and housing support.

So as a show of thanks and appreciation on behalf of all our clients we're inviting you and your friends and family to this wonderfully festive **FREE CONCERT**. The more the merrier because we want 2024 to be the biggest celebration yet. ■

**When:** 3.30pm - 5pm on Sunday December 15th

**Where:** Adam and Eve's Franciscan Church, here on Merchants Quay, Dublin 8

**RSVP:** Please join us for an afternoon of festivity, music and cheer. To reserve your **FREE** places you can call us on **01 524 0139**



## A Rough Sleeper's Wish List

As the bitter cold of winter approaches we need your help to support men and women who are homeless through the difficult months ahead.

Something as basic as a pair of clean dry socks can make a big difference to someone who's feet are tired, sore and soaked. If you can donate any of the basic items listed below please get in touch.



- ✓ Tracksuit pants, leggings, long sleeve t-shirts, fleecy sweatshirts and hoodies
- ✓ New packaged socks and underwear for both women and men
- ✓ Hats, scarves and gloves
- ✓ Toiletries of all kinds: shampoo, shower gel, shaving gel, period products, toothbrush and toothpaste
- ✓ Waterproof jackets and waterproof trousers

You can deliver your items in person to MQI, Merchants Court, 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8. From 10am to 3pm, Monday to Friday. Just call us on **01 524 0139** to let us know you're on the way!

### ✓ Big Wish

### The main kitchen at Riverbank is in need of an upgrade!

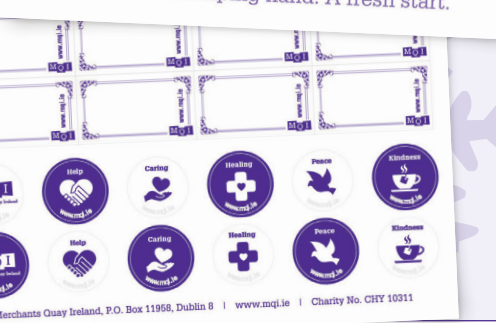
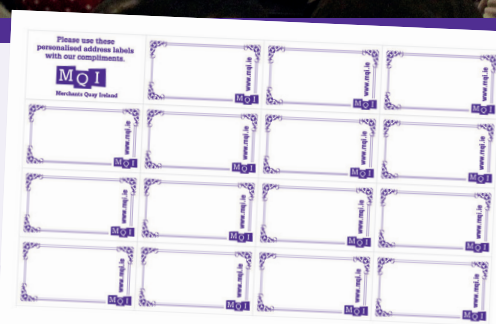
This busy kitchen served 66,126 meals last year. We're looking for someone to make a very special donation of €2,500 to purchase a Heavy Duty 6 Ring Gas Range. Our Big Wish will make sure clients continue to enjoy healthy and hearty home-cooked meals.

If you're in a position to go the extra mile and grant this Big Wish please call John on 01 524 0139.

Thank you!

### Your Special MQI Christmas Labels are Now Available. Order Yours in Time for Your Christmas Post

We know how much our MQI family enjoys having personalised MQI labels for their Christmas post. If you're new to our work or you've just run out of labels... please feel free to ring us and we'd be happy to send you a sheet (or two). Free with our warmest compliments. The cost of printing your labels is tiny but the impact you can have by using them is huge! You will be helping to raise awareness for people with no address to call their own. ■



For your Free Labels, call your MQI donor care team today on 01 524 0139.

Thank you for all your kindness.

# Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

**"This will be the first Christmas I've spent homeless. It's not where I thought I'd be at 60. It's hard for people who are homeless, sometimes you feel the whole country has forgotten you"**

Damien is one of the growing number of people currently homeless in Ireland. He wants you to know the difference your compassion and love are making in the lives of people who, like him, feel alone and uncertain.

If you met Damien, you'd like him. He's just a lovely genuine guy with a really gentle nature. He grew up in a small seaside town but his childhood was far from idyllic.

His house was always full of anger and violence. His father had a problem with alcohol and would take it out on Damien and his mother.

**"There was always shouting and things often turned violent. I used to jump in front of him, trying to protect my mother. He didn't care, he'd just whack me too. I was only about 15 at the time."**

you. I was always seen as a good worker, I was proud of that. America was good to me, I loved it there and I found love there. I was in an amazing relationship for 12 years. She was a very kind, intelligent woman. It was the first loving relationship I'd ever had."

### Difficult Homecoming

After 25 years in America, Damien decided it was time to return home.

But the Ireland he returned to differed greatly from the one he'd left behind. With impossibly high rents and accommodation in short supply, Damien found himself back living at home with his parents.

One thing that hadn't changed was Damien's father's attitude toward him. Once again, he found himself on the receiving end of a barrage of abusive and belittling comments.

As his parents' health began to fail Damien didn't shy away from taking on the role of carer to them both.

### Respected and Loved for the First Time

"When Americans see you're willing to work hard they respect

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**Your generosity gives people the chance of a better future.**



## Your compassion means people aren't forgotten

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That's just the kind of person he is. Despite all the ways his father had let him down when he was growing up, Damien was there for him.

When his mother passed away, Damien stayed on caring for his father in the family home. But as the older man's health declined, it became clear that the care he needed was beyond what Damien could provide.

"I wasn't able to mind him well enough, I didn't know about pads for the bed and stuff like that. So, I took the advice from the doctor and got a professional care worker. It was the right decision of course. But then all of a sudden, my father is looking at me like all I had done for the last three and a half years was nothing. No matter what I did I was useless in his eyes."

**"You always want to believe your parents will be there for you. But my father decided he didn't want or need me anymore, so I was out on the street."**

### Someone to Turn to

"Ireland is a very expensive place to live. Here I was with nowhere to go, and rent was out of my grasp."

"At first I had a few bob, so I stayed in a B+B, but I could see my savings running out fast. I decided I would stay once a week. Just to get a proper sleep and a shave. The rest of the week I slept rough outside Arnotts."

"When you're on the streets you sleep with your stuff glued to you, with one eye open. You never feel



As the cold winter approaches you can provide extra warmth and comfort to those who need it most.

safe. It's hard in Ireland. It's hard. It's harder than it's meant to be. I never thought I'd be in this situation."

"It was in a food line when someone suggested I try Merchants Quay, that's how I ended up in Riverbank, and where I met Martin, the Crisis Support Project Worker."

When you're homeless there aren't many places you feel welcome. At Riverbank the staff greet people who go there by name. And before they know it, there's a cup of tea in their hand and someone ready to help by their side. It can be as simple as a chat and a chance to socialise or as complex as addiction support. Riverbank is here for everyone thanks to your love, kindness and compassion.

### Working his Way Out

The challenge of finding suitable accommodation for Damien weighed heavily on Martin, who became his key worker.

"Damien had never experienced homelessness before. No struggles with alcohol or drug addiction. I needed to find accommodation suitable for a man of his age in his situation."

His options were heartbreakingly limited, but

Martin refused to give up. He secured Damien a hostel specifically for older men and got him access to social welfare payments, giving him some means by which he could start regaining control over his life again.

"I found myself in a hard situation and with Martin's help, I'm working my way out of it. I'm very grateful to have somewhere to lay my head and a small bit of money to keep me going. It's all thanks to Merchants Quay and the people who support them."



In MOI's Riverbank Drop-In Centre clients can enjoy a hot meal, a cup of tea and a chat in warmth and safety. There's also access to medical care, a mental health team and addiction support - all under one roof.

"I hope that I won't always have to be just surviving. I don't know how much time I've left. It would be nice to have a place of my own someday, but I try to take one day at a time."

**Your kindness gives people like Damien hope. And your love will give people the strength to carry on. Thank you.**

Scan the QR code to read Damien's story in his own words.



When a person finds themselves homeless, we are here for them, thanks to you

## AT THE COALFACE

### Crisis Support Project Worker Martin Browne sees your gifts in action every day

A warm welcome and a cup of tea. It may seem small, but for the people who arrive at the door of our Riverbank drop-in centre, it's the human kindness they desperately need. So much good can come from that little cup of kindness. And all of it is made possible by you. We sat down with MOI's Crisis Support Project Worker Martin to find out how he's putting your care and compassion into action.

#### When people first step into Riverbank – how are they supported?

It varies, Riverbank is a bit of a one-stop shop.

A lot of people start coming to Riverbank to meet their most basic needs like a hot cup of tea, a nutritious meal, a place to shower and shave. Somewhere to get some respite from the cold, wet streets.

We concentrate on a person's most urgent needs and take it from there. It might mean focusing on addiction services or getting someone the help they need for any physical or mental health challenges they're dealing with.

Or like in Damien's case the first thing we tackled was getting him access to safe and stable accommodation, then his social welfare benefits, a medical card and getting him onto his local housing list.

Whatever support we provide it's our donors who make it possible. The work that goes on in Riverbank is only possible because of them.

#### How do you go about building trust with people?

You have to meet people where they're at. Coming to Riverbank for the first time can be a daunting experience. Especially hard for older men like Damien, who have never had to ask for help before.

**"First, you establish trust and every piece of progress you make is built on that."**

I just offer people the respect every one of us deserves. I make it clear I'm going to help them as much as I can, but we need to work as a team.

**"The single most important thing I'm here to do is to help as many people out of homelessness as possible. That's what I've been doing for the past ten years and I'll continue to do it till the lights go out."**

#### As winter approaches, do you have particular concerns for people who are homeless?

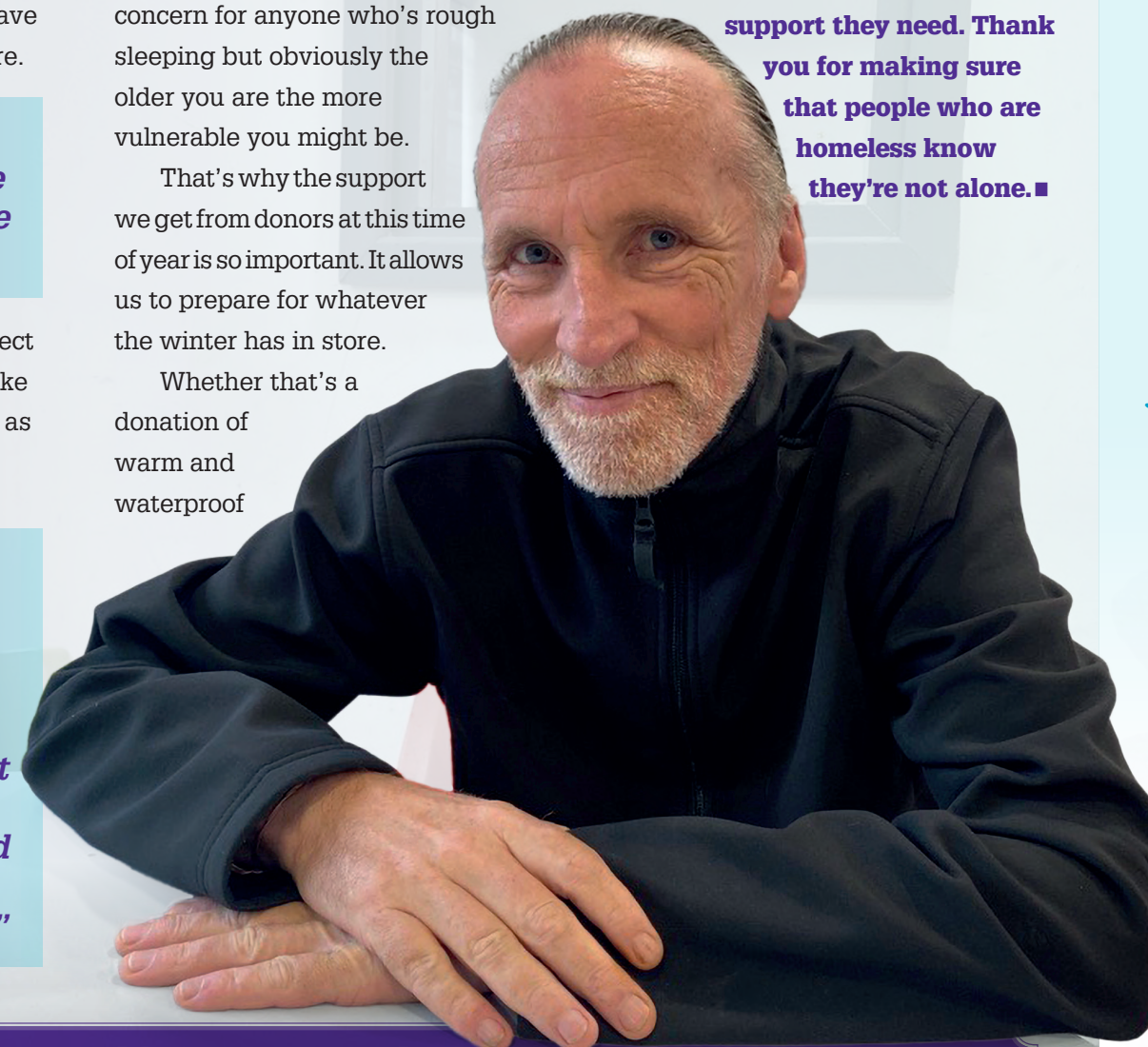
At this time of year, I worry about the weather and how cold the winter might be. It's a serious concern for anyone who's rough sleeping but obviously the older you are the more vulnerable you might be.

That's why the support we get from donors at this time of year is so important. It allows us to prepare for whatever the winter has in store.

Whether that's a donation of warm and waterproof



clothing or the financial support that pays for the food to sustain people. Without the people who care enough to support MOI, our work would not be possible. **Your love and generosity are making it possible to give people the support they need. Thank you for making sure that people who are homeless know they're not alone.**



**Your love and generosity are making it possible to give people the support they need. Thank you for making sure people are seen and their voices are heard.**

## You've done so much! Thank you

A warm safe place of respite, away from the cold, hard streets. The sound of human kindness, welcoming you to "Come in, sit down and have a bite to eat". The hot water of the shower as it cleans and restores dignity. **All these ordinary things were made possible by your extraordinary generosity.**



**13,516**

individual people helped thanks to you



**4,357**

hot showers powered by you



**66,126**

meals served thanks to you



**2,079**

people supported by our mental health team



**3,928**

people supported by our crisis contact team

Thank you for your unwavering support and compassion.

A huge MOI thank you to Karen Brennan who recently completed a 12-hour WALKATON to raise funds for our St. Francis Farm Residential Detox and Rehab service.



Karen (centre) with Norah and Aoife from SFF

Karen was up with the sun at 5am and walked until 5pm, raising an amazing €1,200.

If you'd like to do a fundraiser for MOI contact Shauna Enright on 01 524 0139.