Volunteering with Dublin Simon

There are over 140 volunteers working throughout the Dublin Simon Community. They are involved in the Soup Run, Social Club, Supported Housing, Tenancy Sustainment, the **Emergency Shelter and the** Addiction Services on either a full-time or part-time basis. Volunteer's contribution to the work of the Community is invaluable. Ciara Moran is one of our full-time volunteers in the Detox Unit. This is her story.

I first became interested in voluntary work in my teenage years when I worked with the elderly in an old folk's home and also as a beaver leader with young children. I found this type of work extremely enriching and rewarding. When I was at college I became interested in working with homeless people and would often stop and chat to people on the streets. I felt that it was an injustice that so many people were on the streets and wondered if there was anything I could do to help.

It was a nurse that told me about the Dublin Simon Community when I expressed an interest in volunteering. I began working as a volunteer at the social club on Monday and Wednesday nights. I was a little apprehensive at first not knowing what to expect but each person had their own story to share and I learnt a great deal from each one. I discovered such talented human beings damaged by the hardship, poverty and depression in their lives. It was an eye opening experience that made me want to become more involved.



I decided that social care was As a volunteer it is my job to the area for me and to gain experience I became a full time volunteer. I feel very grateful for this wonderful opportunity and also for the valuable experience that I am getting in the Detox unit. The Dublin Simon Detox unit is for homeless people recovering from alcohol addiction. Clients undergo a three week medically assisted detox in the unit before having the option of going to Rehab. Every week there are new admissions. When clients start their detox they are often very sick and suffering from withdrawals. After their first two days they begin to participate in group work and attend group outings to art exhibitions and museums. This builds their confidence and offers clients an My experience of volunteering in Dublin Simon continues to be a alternative option to socialising with alcohol. positive and educational one and

bring them on outings and often get the opportunity to sit in on groups. This gives me a deeper insight into the service user and their experience of Detox. It is very rewarding to see a client doing well and makes my job as a volunteer so worthwhile. I have had the privilege to meet some very talented artistic service users since I've been with Dublin Simon. One of the service users did my portrait for me which I treasure. Very often the place is buzzing with music as some of the clients are very musical and play the guitar. I love to see the service users using their creativity to express themselves. It is good for mental health and is a wonderful emotional release.

I look forward to my time ahead.

Review of Recent Events

Fun Run 2008

This year saw the 25th anniversary of the Dublin Simon Fun Run which took place in the Phoenix Park on the 11th of October and was a massive success. The rain held off for the day and the number of participants exceeded 1,500. Well done to all the participants who ran, walked, jogged and jumped their way to the finish line. The overall winner of the race was Richie Coughlan who finished the race with the impressive time of 25 minutes and 28 seconds. Well done and thanks to all who took part in the race, their sponsors, and especially thanks to all the volunteers who helped out on the day.

This year Dublin Simon charity hikers made the trek to Patagonia and hiked through some of Argentina's amazing wilderness from November 9th to 19th. All those involved put in great time and effort both in terms of hiking and also fundraising. Dublin Simon would like to thank all those who took part in this

hugely successful hike.



Preview of Up-Coming Events

The 21st of December is the longest night of the year and possibly one of the worst nights to be without a home. This year Dublin Simon will be holding a 24 hour carol a thon on Grafton St. on December 21st. All are asked to come and play their part in ending homelessness. That same night in the Button Factory, Temple Bar, Paddy Casey,

Patagonian Hikers Return



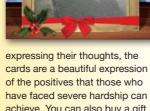


cards are a beautiful expression of the positives that those who have faced severe hardship can achieve. You can also buy a gift for family, friends and loved ones with Dublin Simon Community. For more information see www. dublinsimongiftappeal.com

40th Anniversary

faced by those experiencing ie. We'd love to get as many people as possible who have shared their generosity with Simon to be part of our 40th Anniversary celebrations.

Dublin Simon Christmas cards. Designed using photographs taken by our service users and



Dublin Simon Community

2009 is the 40th Anniversary of

the founding of the Dublin Simon Community. The year will be full of events celebrating the work of volunteers throughout the years while also highlighting the issues that are still, after 40 years, being homelessness. If you have ever volunteered with Dublin Simon or know anyone who has, please contact sharonkeogh@dubsimon.

Leave something behind for those society has left behind.

For many the idea of making a will is a turn off, but it is something we all need to do for the sake of our families and loved ones. By making a will, you can provide for the people you love and help to make things easier for them after you are

While you are drawing up your will and making provision for your loved ones, you can also take the opportunity to help people who are homeless or at the risk of homelessness in the Dublin area.

By making a beguest to Dublin Simon Community you are giving life and dignity in a way in which the benefits of your generosity will continue long into the future.

For more information please call (01) 671 5551, email fundraising@dubsimon.ie or write to;

Dublin Simon Community PO Box 581 Freepost F2015 Dublin 2

To get involved or for more information please contact: lornacronnelly@dubsimon.ie Tel: (01) 6715551

Rough Sleeper Team: 01 872 0185 roughsleeperteam@dubsimon.ie

Dublin Simon Community,

1-2 Cope Street, Dublin 2 Tel: 01 671 5551 Fax: 01 671 5524 www.dublinsimon.ie info@dubsimon.ie



LONELY

In the darkness of the street at night or in the light of day, it can make the day drag or the night seem longer.

It's everywhere; it can be at home, or in the workplace, on a bus, in a car. in a café or a bar. a shopping mall, or in a park.

But it is also found in hostels. loneliness at its worst. it's a place you don't want to be, so many people are there and in some places, no one to care.

It's crazy, you could be with other people, yet be lonely. the fear that you might not connect, shaking inside, all sorts running round in your head, some are like you, yet they are just masking it in a clever way.

You will never know, they won't say. they just carry on masking it day to day. So if you look at the bigger picture vou are not as alone

as you may think. It's not easy but you have to find a way or someone like you and learn how to deal with being lonely day to day.

I know

because I was once lonely too. and have also been on the streets with no one to turn to

By John Davidson Resident. **Dublin Simon Supported Housing**





STEPID

photography exhibition 'Past, Present and Future' which took place in the Civic Offices during the summer were resurrected to life in this year's Dublin Simon Annual Report.

The report features many of the photographs that were taken as part of a Digital Photography Project which ran over 8 weeks with a group of 11 Dublin Simon service users taking part. The project, funded by an Age & Opportunity grant, provided a medium for participants to capture their perceptions regarding their individual pasts, presents and particularly their futures. The results were

outstanding with many service

users demonstrating a natural

Many of the images evoke

ability with the digital equipment.



Speaking at the launch of the Dublin Simon Annual Report in September, Irish Times Journalist Fintan O'Toole congratulated the achievements of this group of photographers and praised

said "This is a perfect example of how people's perception of those who have experienced, or are experiencing, homelessness is distorted. It is not always selfinflicted. We are working with and supporting hundreds of people who are making an effort to get their lives back together. Those that participated in the photography course are talented and courageous people who prove that people who have experienced homelessness have the same talents, needs and

Jublin Simon

The Dublin Simon Annual Report 2008 can be downloaded from www.dubsimon.ie or if you would like a copy please contact (01) 6715551.

rights as anyone else".

message, you could consider the For more information on any of the above see www.dubsimon.ie or call (01) 6715551

Guggenheim Grotto, Heathers

to the stage in aid of Dublin

and Mighty Stef will all be taking

Simon. The gig promises to be

a sell-out so get your tickets

and more information on www.

longestnight.ie . When you're

homeless, every night is the

Christmas Cards and Gifts

f you'd like to send Christmas

cards this year with a meaningful

longest night.

their work. Chief Executive of amusement or hope while others have a sense of poignancy **Dublin Simon Sam McGuinness** towards them.

Welcome

People come to Dublin Simon Community to change something; they don't wish to stay in the misery they are in. They need belief and hope that change for them is possible.

Recently we have become aware of a worrying trend of increased numbers contacting our Rough Sleeper Team. Some of our recent responses have been to create additional emergency accommodation and stabilisation in partnership with Dublin City Council and Dun Laoghaire County Council, for homeless rough sleepers. Unfortunately despite these efforts, there is still not enough appropriate accommodation out there.

In excess of 80% of people in established emergency accommodation throughout the city have been there for over 6 months and over 50% of these have been in emergency accommodation for more than 2 years. There are simply insufficient accommodation options - they have no place to go, no future choices, no where to call home.

The state of the national economy and financial turbulence internationally is very disturbing for every one, not least of all for people who are already sick, vulnerable and poverty stricken. State funding is under constant pressure and is becoming more constrained and unpredictable.

In these chaotic times, our service users, staff and



try to contemplate increased requirements and demand for our services, we experience greater competition for the limited funds available, and have no guarantee of further state support. We will continue to strive for the wisdom. skill and expertise to stretch

every penny available.

For all those of you who have had the courage and belief to help, we sincerely thank you.



A Day in the **Life Series**

This series looks at a different Dublin Simon service or team in each issue of Step Up, and tells you about 'A Day in the Life' of that service or team. This issue looks at our Supported Housing project on the North Circular Road and is written by long time staff member Daniel Watts.

The North Circular Road project is long term supported housing provided by the Dublin Simon Community with the capacity for 23 single homeless men and women over the age of 18. Many of the residents who present to the service have mental health. alcohol, addiction and personal care needs and require a medium to high level of support.

The project consists of two buildings. Kelly House houses the female residents in the project and the other, accessible from the North Circular Road, houses the male residents. All residents would have access to a shared dinning room and there own TV room, one in each building. There is also an office in both buildings that are used by staff for the day to day running of the project and by residents for key working.

An average day in the North Circular Road project begins at 8am when the project staff open up the buildings for the residents. Nearly all of the residents would be up at this time. Some would start the day with breakfast; other residents would have a quick chat before going to work. Many of our residents would receive medication, money and other personnel items throughout the morning

For the residents the rest of the long term supported housing. day will be varied and their care There is also cleaning and plans would be implemented with kitchen staff and two hot meals a the help of the project staff. The day for eveyone. residents will have appointments. cleaning duties to attend to, they

laundry and they may have key

have family and friends to meet,

need to collect welfare payments

and pay rent. Volunteers play

a vital role in helping residents

with these duties and attending

appointments with them when

Staff will be on the project to

support residents in their day

administrative side of running

to day needs as well as the

and where necessary.

staff. Other residents might

Evenings are very relaxed: may need assistance in cleaning residents may have quests or there own rooms, or doing there spend their time socialising with other residents, maybe watching working sessions with the project a DVD in the TV room. There may a few things to attend to regarding there care plan and attend classes to assist them in medication to be taken before there personnel development, or



50% increase in the number of people accessing the services of the Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team. This is a startling statistic and one which Dublin Simon is working tirelessely to combat. Since, and during that timespan Dublin Simon has opened two new night shelters to help cope with the number of people sleeping rough on the streets at night. These shelters provide 28 beds between them.

The first half of 2008 saw a near

The first new shelter which was set up in Dun Laoghaire last February has extended its operation time and is open every day until 1pm. It continues to assist people experiencing

homelessness in the Dun Laoghaire area and provides them with a place of respite.

The occupancy rates in the Dun Laoghaire shelter exceeded 95% in August and are increasing every month. As well as providing a safe place for homeless people to rest and avail of food and a laundry service, other resources such as PCs and a learning and development programme are being addressed.

The second new night shelter was opened in Ushers Island in the city. Occupancy rates are again increasing month on month and staff at the shelter have noted that many experiencing

long-term homelessness who previously would not have accessed any emergency shelter are now regularly staying at the shelter. The shelter has also been boosted with the news that the Dublin Simon nurse, who is based in Harcourt Street, will also be attending clients in the Ushers Island shelter.

The Rough Sleeper Team, who refer many of their clients into the shelters, encourages those experiencing homelessness to access accommodation and health and social welfare services and operates seven days a week, 365 days of the year.



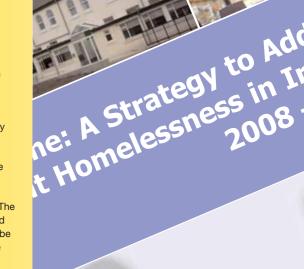
Homeless Strategy 'The Way Home'. Dublin Simon Community welcomed the continued commitment by government to the eradication of the need to sleep rough and to reducing the length of time people have to stay in emergency accommodation by 2010. However, Dublin Simon also raised its concern about the need of dedicate adequate resources and appropriate responsibilities for the plan to have any chance of success. The Simon Communities has called on an implementation plan to be produced as soon as possible

At the launch of the new

for the responsibility of the implementation of the Strategy to be assigned to the appropriate body and believe that timelines are vital for the delivery and implementation of each action as described and signed up to in the new Strategy. The implementation plan must identify where additional funds required for the success of the strategy will be sourced. Stakeholder involvement is also key to the success of the strategy and consistent monitoring and evaluation must be carried out at all stages of implementation.

Dublin Simon have called

Dublin Simon is also concerned at the omission of a definition of homelessness in the strategy and would ask that this be addressed. We believe that assessing the situation on an on-going basis is very important and would recommend that the Central Statistics Office be utilised to



gather data. We also highlight the need for long-term support such as the allocation of housing and rent assistant and for the plan to be flexible to take new trends into consideration.

Dublin Simon Community will work tirelessly with government bodies and other voluntary organisation in their quest to help alleviate and combat homelessness and will continue to be a voice for those whose voices are not heard.

A copy of the new National Strategy can be found on the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government website www.environ.ie



