STEP Donor Update

40 years Combating Homelessness

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of Dublin Simon Community. Founded in 1969 by a group of UCD and Trinity students, Dublin Simon has grown and developed from these inspirational beginnings to become one of Dublin's most recognisable homeless charities, working with over 2,000 people every year.

The story began in London with Anton Wallich-Clifford: a probation officer in the earlier 1960's. In his line of work Anton encountered a large number of homeless people. Realising that prison sentences and the firm hand of the law did little to halt their appearances in court, he endeavoured to find a more effective solution. Every evening after work Anton would spend his time on the streets of London making friends with these "vagrants", sleeping rough alongside them and eventually gaining there trust.

"What was really wanted was a quiet half an hour in the warm with an attentive listening ear; an atmosphere as different as possible from the dismal disinfected corridors of dosshouses."

From here Anton set up a different kind of service for those



Miriam O'Callaghan is joined by founding volunteer Larry Masterson, Dublin Simon CEO Sam McGuinness, Dublin footballers Denis Bastic and Mark Devoran and Dublin Simon volunteers to launch the 40th Anniversary of Dublin Simon Community.

experiencing homelessness which demonstrated a more caring side to society. This was Simon, a community offering a radical alternative to institutional care. The Simon Community was named after Simon of Cyrene, a character from the New Testament who helped Jesus carry his cross. Anton's ideals spread like wildfire throughout England and it was in 1969 that he brought them to Dublin to address students from UCD and Trinity College.

An extraordinary public speaker, Anton visited Dublin and enraptured this group of

students. One in particular, Larry Masterson, found great inspiration in Anton's talks. With Anton's assistance Larry lead the first Dublin Simon soup-runners onto the city streets in March 1969. The soup-run proved to be a valuable substance to many on the city's streets and before long Larry and other volunteers sought to acquire a residential house to give rough sleepers and volunteers a place to rest. A Franciscan priest, Fr. Frank O'Leary offered the soup-runners the upstairs room of a disused house on Winetavern street: Dublin Simon's first residential

Welcome



There were at times, during the past 40 years, different ways of describing the Simon philosophy. It was said to be based on the three fundamental concepts of identification, non-judgemental acceptance and therapeutic community. The concept of unconditional help was sometimes used.

"Simon Community was born of my frustrations" said Mr Wallich-Clifford, who was a probationary officer, specialising in cases of no-fixed abodes. His visit to Dublin in 1969 was to initiate cross-water cooperation and dialogue and was provoked by the large numbers of Irish in Britain who the Simon Community there were working with.

The "Simon" ethos was to be non judgemental accepting people

as we find them and offering unconditional help – a community in it for each other. It was Catholic founded but Christian in inspiration – "A beggar for beggars".

Over the past 40 years Simon has served people fighting for survival, robbed of humanity and dignity, who were not slotting in. They were homeless, roofless and socially inadequate or isolated, vagrants, dossers, drug addicts, mentally disturbed and unable to cope with life in the 20th century.

They needed nourishment, shelter, acceptance, respect, they were begging for survival, drinking as an escape valve.

Now in 2009 so many things have changed but for people caught in homelessness, so few! We still have people sleeping on our city streets nightly. We have hundreds of people living for long periods in night-only shelters driven out during the day without consideration to weather, health or circumstance. We have in excess of 2.000 people classified as homeless in the greater Dublin area in the last official count. We are witnessing a significant number of people from abroad sleeping rough on the streets or in squats, with nowhere to go and caught in the economic downturn with no benefits, social assistance or affordability except the streets.

People are depending on us and we in turn are depending on you so thank you for your continued support to the work of the Dublin Simon Community.

Continued from page 1

house. As the number of residents increased it became clear to volunteers that while the notion of young students devoting their free time to aid the plight of "down and outs" was romantic, it would require a solid company structure before Simon could make real

use of two vacant houses on Sarsfield Quay. The forming of this committee marked a pivotal milestone in the history of Dublin Simon.

Today Anton Wallich-Clifford's original vision remains at the core of the Dublin Simon Community's work. Today over 250 part-time volunteers and

For forty years now Simon has come in where others leave off and has worked for those unable to accept existing help, or for whom no adequate provisions exist.

progress. In September 1970 an executive committee was formed and chaired by Frank Sweeney, a solicitor and established member of the soup-run team. The committee managed to successfully negotiate with Dublin Corporation for the

full-time volunteers continue to dedicate themselves to helping some of the most vulnerable in society. Our Soup-run and rough sleeper teams continue to take the initiative by making contact with those sleeping rough on our streets. The "community" feel

that Anton sought to establish is still alive inside our shelters and our supported houses for those in need of permanent care. It is also still alive in our treatment services, provided by our alcohol detox and rehabilitation shelters. On an organizational level, we continue to meet with statutory bodies and ensure that Dublin Simon remains a prominent voice for those who would otherwise not be heard. As a result, today not only can we serve to keep people experiencing homelessness away from the courts as Anton original envisioned but we can assist people at every stage of homelessness, help them to rebuild their lives and enable them to move to a place they can call home.

Replicating Volunteers from Forty Years Ago

By full-time volunteer Paul Maher

Our sleep-out on Grafton
St commemorated the 40th
anniversary of The Dublin Simon
Community where we replicated
an event that had taken place
in 1969 when group of students
from Trinity College and UCD
slept out in order to highlight
the plight of those experiencing
homelessness at the time. 40
years on and our objective was
much the same, throughout the
course of the night

I got a tiny glimpse of what it was like to sleep on the streets of Dublin and a chance to reflect upon the bravery and initiative shown by those students back in 1969.

At the beginning of the night some of the students from '69. were kind enough to join us and say a few words. These included Larry Masterson, Denis Cahalane, John Long and Peter Mooney all early supporters of the Simon ethos. They told us a little bit about the reasons they had set out to care for those who at the time were labelled "vagrants" and some of the tales of those times. Once they left we gathered together some cardboard to lay our sleeping bags on and settled down at the top of Grafton St. The atmosphere was good among the volunteers at this stage of the night. As the night progressed and darkness fell the atmosphere on the streets began to change. People are sometimes less polite at night than they are during the day. Passers-by became ever more inquisitive and some of the more intoxicated even sought to join us. I thought



Paul Maher (centre) with other volunteers Clemence Guibert and Ed Manning, after a cold night on Grafton Street with a coffee from Dublin Simon CEO Sam McGuinness

about what it would be like to spend a succession of nights on the street and to see people in this light so often.

I didn't hold out much hope of getting any sleep and while at times I felt that I could understand what it would be like to sleep this way every night, I was under no illusions. I found it ironic that passers-by commended us on our bravery. They would walk by lonely rough sleepers without a glance but had words of encouragement for us as we chatted together and chewed on the food that had been provided. Far from the loneliness and isolation that rough sleepers experienced, we were a group of friends spending one night on the streets together. Having said this, I still appreciated the acknowledgment of those who commended us. What struck me was how

the stigma associated with homelessness created such a distance between the average passer-by and the rough sleeper. Knowing that our sleep-out was not as a result of homelessness made it easier for passers-by to approach us with their kind words. These words, I feel, were not meant for us but born out of a genuine concern many felt for the lonely rough sleeper. We were perhaps a medium through which



Volunteers from Dublin Simon sleep out in the same to highlight the continued plight of people experies

Concentrating on what we do best.

some felt they could bridge this gap that stigma creates.

As morning approached the music stopped and the number of drunken passer bys began to diminish. Things became a lot quieter and it was maybe the ideal time to get some sleep. By 8 o' clock Wednesday morning we were greeted with a coffee from Sam and were ready to move. On the journey home I thought about those students from 1969 who after a night delivering soup and sandwiches on the streets would return to class the next morning. The initiative they showed means that today Simon is able to care for so many people. I find it a great source of inspiration and hope that one day I could be apart of something so meaningful. I am reminded of a quote I once heard -

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has"

Dublin Simon New Strategic Plan 2009 - 2011

Dublin Simon's new Strategic
Plan focuses on the services
we currently operate and the
expansion of those to provide
support to the most marginalised
homeless person - those
you see on the street and in
need of additional services,
support and quality temporary
accommodation.

To achieve this we will:

- Restructure and consolidate

 a number of our homeless
 services to ensure the
 maximum experience of
 homelessness is six months
 or less within our service.
- We will provide a range of high quality support to our service users. They will have individual key workers that will support them from temporary accommodation to securing their own home and continue to offer support so that they don't become homeless again.
- In the current economic climate we want to make sure that Dublin Simon becomes a sustainable Organisation and is cost effective in how we operate so that everyone in the community has the support and resources to achieve their potential.

What does this mean then?

Dublin Simon will continue to develop and expand its street outreach team making sure it knows the rough sleeping population in Dublin and is able to provide proper and appropriate good quality sheltered accommodation.

We will work with other NGO's to deliver good quality temporary accommodation for our homeless population working with both the Local authorities and Health Executive to achieve this.

Dublin Simon will also address the need for local services in local communities so that the intensity of work and homeless issues is not just prevalent on the main streets of Dublin.

We will provide opportunities to our staff and service users to develop their skills so that the service we provide improves over the three years. For our service users we will offer them the opportunity of training courses and programmes to assist them into independent living in the community, including possible volunteering opportunities and/or seeking new employment.

For more information see www. dubsimon.ie/publications

A Day In The Life: Dublin Simon Rehab

Clemence Guibert, a full-time volunteer in the **Dublin Simon Rehab Service** describes the programme and her daily routine.

"Dublin Simon's residential alcohol service on Usher's island runs a rehabilitation programme (rehab) available to 12 people, at any one time, who seek help to overcome an alcohol addiction. This is the only residential rehab programme available to people experiencing homelessness in Dublin, Clients are referred to rehab from Dublin Simon's detox service (which is run in the same building) other homeless services, hospitals, prohibition services or self-referral. Rehab is a three month live-in programme to open up and discuss any personal issues with the group in an understanding environment. On Mondays group-time is a little different and involves a clean up of the building. On Tuesdays the aftercare and resettlement teams discuss options for accommodation after rehab is over. Wednesdays and Thursdays are relapse prevention. This highlights techniques and tips to help residents deal with their addictions. It can involve discussing specific emotions like depression and how one can overcome them. Everyone is given an opportunity to contribute ways that they may find personally helpful. Friday's

Rehab recently got a splash of colour vith volunteers and service users opting for a hot new red to don the front door.

or maybe put together a CV.

or maybe put together a CV. Following afternoon activities, dinner takes place from 5-6. The evening is then put aside as free-time for residents. Some have AA meetings to attend and they are given computer access and volunteers help them with any homework they may have to do or teach reading and writing skills to those who have trouble with this. Residents can also have visitors join them until 11pm and everyone hits the sack at 11:30pm.

"Weekends are a bit more relaxed and on Saturdays residents, volunteers and staff usually do something social for the day such as visiting the zoo or a museum. Residents really enjoy these outings and it can be a lot of fun for everybody. What makes rehab such a wonderful place to work is the family atmosphere around the place when the house is full. There is a great sense of unity. Also, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing somebody successfully complete the program. People arrive in detox lost, with addictions and sometimes not even knowing how to read or write. After successfully completing the program they are unrecognisable. They look and feel great. It's very inspirational work and gives you a real lift."

"People arrive in detox lost, with addictions and sometimes not even knowing how to read or write. After successfully completing the program they are unrecognisable."

with an aftercare programme that provides accommodation for service users who wish to continue with support.

"Everyday in rehab is well planned out as introducing structure to an individual's day is an important part of treatment. Every morning begins with daily chores ensuring that each resident has a job, understands what they need to do and has no problems doing it. Following this there is "morning focus" where a different resident decides on something to do that morning. It usually involves playing pool, watching TV or having breakfast together in the dining room.

The group sessions, which start at 10.30, are central to any day in rehab as it allows residents group involves a review of the week where any issues that residents may have can be brought up and dealt with in a responsible manner.

"Following a good lunch afternoon activities begin and can involve a life skills class, relaxation class or the jobs club. Life-skills involve teaching service users to do something others may take for granted such as paving bills. Cooking is also popular while relaxation class involves laying back and listening to relaxing music. On Friday afternoon's volunteers accompany service users to the jobs club. This takes place in the CDVEC on Parnell square where residents can use the computers and search for employment opportunities

Volunteering with **Dublin Simon**

I remember listening to the voice of a young women on my answering machine on my phone in Germany. She said: "This is a message for Jan, I just want to tell you, that the Simon Community in Ireland have decided to offer you a position as a Full Time Volunteer. Your interview was successful. Congratulations! Happy Easter! "That was exactly one year ago and it's unbelievable how time has flown.

I have been on the 'Green Island' since the beginning of last September, working as a Full Time Volunteer in Sean Mac Dermott Supported Housing.



(as the Irish would say). The situation I was confronted with was new for me. A situation full of vulnerable personalities; histories made out of loss, pain, grief and isolation. That was a situation I never dealt with before

experience.

In the last few months I have learned a lot about myself and about judging people. That vou often cannot trust first impressions, at least until you have talked to somebody and vou have looked underneath the surface. The work in Sean Mac is challenging me almost every day, personally, physically and especially mentally. Outside the project I spend a lot of time thinking about what I have experienced and what I have seen. Talking to other volunteers and even family and friends at home in Germany helps me deal with that. It's not one of the easiest jobs, but one where

"The situation I was confronted with, was new for me. A situation full of vulnerable personalities; histories made out of loss, pain, grief and isolation.

Just imagine how it felt, leaving a whole life behind you in Germany, going to another country, meeting new people, being confronted with new tasks, living in a new home, facing new challenges.

Sounds frightening? I can tell you, it's great. After the first week in Dublin I was sure that there was no better decision I could have made for myself.

Working with the Dublin Simon Community means a lot to me now. After six and a half months I have found a new temporary home. From my first day in the Sean Mac project I felt like a welcome member of the team and even after two weeks I was not just the volunteer, I was Jan. It's a good feeling when you are accepted and respected right from the beginning, but not everything was hunky-dory

and now found myself right in the middle of. Apart from coaching children in swimming, I had no experience in any kind of social work and was now supposed to be as supportive as I could to drug users, alcoholics and people who didn't mind if they shower once a week or just once

In the last few months I have learned a lot about myself and about judging people. That you often cannot trust first impressions, at least until you have talked to somebody and you have looked underneath the surface."

every second week. A group of people, to whom I never really paid attention to, except from judging them for their messed up lives. However the side I have seen here is people, who are so intelligent, caring, friendly, funny, and who are at the same time so grateful for every help they get, and I really appreciate this

you can see and feel everyday what you have done. Opening the door for the residents, when it's lashing rain and freezing cold outside, saying "Welcome home!" and seeing a relieved smile on their faces makes all the serious problems disappear.

Jan Schneider

EventsRecent and Upcoming

RECENT EVENTS

SIMON SUPPORTERS TAKE TO THE SKY

Simon supporters led by Lorraine Maloney and Mary Murphy recently took to the skies in a fantastic skydiving effort and raised over €0,000 for Dublin Simon services. Those who took to the sky reported it as being one of the most exhilarating experiences of their lives. For us here in Simon, we would like to thank them for jumping out of a plane on behalf of Dublin Simon! We would also like to thank all those who supported them in their fundraising efforts be it through money raising, lifts, sponsorship of prizes and those who helped arrange and promote events and all else that this great event entailed.

'SHOW YOUR TRUE COLOURS'

CROKE PARK, JUNE 7TH

The streets of Dublin were awash with blue, navy, yellow and green faces for the Dublin vs Meath Championship GAA match as the Show Your True Colours Team painted faces all over the city. As part of the 40th Year Commemoration, Dublin Simon volunteers took to the street raising awareness, painting faces and asking all supporters to Show Their True Colours for **Dublin Simon Community.** A big thank you to the 150 volunteers who took to the streets painting faces and to all those who supported, not only their county team, but Dublin Simon Community.

On June 7th Dublin Simon Volunteers were out in force painting Dublin and Meath faces outside Croke Park for the first round of the Championship.



Niamh Maloney takes to the skies for Dublin Simon



Doug Bradshaw shows how it's done in a recent sky dive on behalf of Dublin Simon Community

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUMMER SOLSTICE 2009

Taking place on the longest day of the year, June 21st, this is a wonderful and informative walk through our city where our heritage, new and old, will be displayed and discussed by top walking guides. Run in conjunction with Friends of the Elderly this is a beautiful celebratory walk through Dublin's streets.

DUBLIN SIMON COMMUNITY 40TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EVENT

Dublin Simon Community will be holding a 40th Year
Commemoration event on Sept
19th in Dublin Castle where we will feature photographs and stories from Simon throughout the years and entertainment for all those attending. We would love all supporters and past volunteers or staff to come along on the day. For more information please contact Lorna Cronnelly on (01) 6715551 or lornacronnelly@dubsimon.ie

FUN RUN TIME

This years FUN RUN 2009 will take place on October 10th in the Phoenix Park and will, as always, be a day of family fun with races for all age groups, entertainment and of course the showcase 5 mile run. Registration will open in the summer but if you'd like any more information to help with your early prep please contact funrun@dubsimon.ie





For more information on any of the above see www.dubsimon.ie or call (01) 6715551

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 gone.

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 bequest 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



FORTY YEARS DUBLIN SIMON

You come like doves bringing hope and love to the people on the sreet that some of society has given up on

Some of these people may be in the darkness of addiction

If they put little trust in Dublin Simon they can lead them from darkness and back into the light

Addiction free given time then their talents can shine again

Dublin Simon have been taking people off the streets for forty years now and saved a lot of lives

In that time so many people have the Simon to thank over the years for their lives

As they would be dead if not for Dublin Simon

So here's to another forty years we hope

God Bless Dublin Simon

By John Davidson *Resident*,
Dublin Simon Supported Housing