

Quay Times



The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland | Spring 2011

St. Francis Farm: The Place Where Miracles Grow

As spring breathes new life into the land, the new detox unit at St. Francis Farm in Tullow, Co Carlow, is 100% complete – with the first new clients arriving by early summer. This month, discover the farm your kindness is helping build...



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD WOLONEY

St. Francis Farm's new 10-bed detox unit will help over 100 men and women safely detox from heroin each year.

It's official: the new ten-bed detox unit at St. Francis Farm will begin accepting clients as soon as late spring or early summer. When operating at full capacity, this state of the art facility will ease an acute shortage of detox beds for drug users in Ireland, and provide a safe, medically assisted detoxification for up to 130 men and women each year.

Detox and the Transition Into Rehab

Before rehabilitation can take place, the first step away from addiction is detoxification, or 'detox.' And for many of those with heroin addictions, a medically assisted detox – like the kind St. Francis Farm will soon offer – is critical. (See 'Why Detox?' on page 3.)

Having detox and residential rehab programmes on one site will

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Witness the transformative power of your generosity, in:

The Strength to Say Goodbye

At St. Francis Farm, one man gains the strength to say goodbye: to his painful past, longstanding addictions and self-destructive way of life. In the process, he finds a whole new Neil...

Drug use often begins as a way to be one of the gang. Not for Neil.

The cocktail of drugs he started using at age 15 – grass,

speed, cocaine, ecstasy – was, in his own words, “the cure for my feelings.” From ages 4 to 14, awful childhood events he was too small to control left Neil

desperate for a way to “block away nasty memories.”

He hid it from his family, saying, “I had a good childhood.

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[How you helped make the Christmas match a success, page 4](#)

St. Francis Farm: The Place Where Miracles Grow



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD MOLONEY

Cooking with Chef Ali

Rehab clients take a weeklong turn in the kitchen with Chef Ali, who has been cooking for residents for over five years. Ali helps his chef-apprentices write a menu for their entire seven days, shop, and prepare the meals. His most challenging helper so far didn't even know how to boil eggs. Ali recalls: "I ask him, 'How do you live?' I teach him to cook, simple, simple. Eggs...beef... how to do things for himself. I do whatever I can to help, because they have a future for themselves."

He's happy to watch clients' health return. "After a week or so, they're healthier. They get up early, work in the farm, in the fresh air." Most rewarding is when he sees them again after a successful rehabilitation. "Ali, Ali!" they say. They hug me, and they've done really well for themselves."

Where Miracles Still Grow

The programme is emotionally intense, admits project worker Ronan O'Riain. And with 15,000 heroin users in Ireland, demand for detox and rehab still outstrips capacity by a long shot. O'Riain has been with Merchants Quay for nine years now, and sees the new detox unit as a positive change because it will provide a "wider range of services" for men and women who need help.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD MOLONEY

Farm life includes animal care, gardening and woodworking. The timber kiosk, top left, was built by a client.

Renovations like those to the rehab facility, above, mean St. Francis Farm can help two and half times as many clients.

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maximise resources and be a major advantage for clients who come to St. Francis Farm. Once clients are drug free for at least two weeks, they can easily transition into the Farm's 14-week residential rehabilitation programme, or be placed in other rehab programmes.

Farm Life as Therapy

At St. Francis Farm, day-to-day life on a working farm is an essential and unique part of the rehab programme. Whether repairing fences, looking after the animals, sowing seeds or chopping logs, residents learn to face their fears and try new things, building self-sufficiency and personal responsibility all the while. There is also a woodwork shop on site where residents learn wood-turning, carving and basic carpentry skills. All of the produce grown at St. Francis Farm supplies not only the Farm itself, but also Merchants Quay's Dublin facilities.

Direct therapy is provided through group and one-to-one counselling sessions that help residents work through the underlying issues that led to addiction. There are seminars on coping skills, anger management, addiction and bereavement, and educational workshops such as computer training.

Neil, a client whose story begins on page 1, sums up what happens, down on the Farm. "Merchants Quay produce miracles. Even if you can only save one life, it's a miracle. But to save more than one..." As his voice trails off, we thank you for helping make each miracle possible.

Open House at St. Francis Farm

Watch your mail slot later this year for an invitation to the early-autumn Open House at St. Francis Farm. We hope you can join us!



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD MOLONEY

The new detox unit's common areas offer space to heal and reflect.



The rehab staff: Trisha, Joe, Annette, Christy, Amanda, Nora & Ronan. Together they have over 100 years experience helping people overcome addiction!

Why Detox? How You're Fixing the Rehab Bottleneck

A severe shortage of detox beds in Ireland is keeping men and women from entering drug free rehabilitation programmes like Merchants Quay's. For many of the country's heroin users, the holdup could prove fatal. Below, the facts on how you're helping free the bottleneck:

- **Drug free first:** Before drug users can enter any rehabilitation programme, including Merchants Quay's, they must first be drug free, or 'detoxed'
- **The right detox:** Men and women with entrenched heroin addictions often require a type of detoxification called 'medical detox.' As inpatients, they are helped through heroin's painful withdrawal symptoms, while their health is closely monitored to prevent side-effects and avoid relapse (during which time there is a major risk of fatal overdose)
- **Current shortage** of inpatient (residential) detox beds: with an estimated 15 – 20,000 heroin users in Ireland there are currently less than 30 dedicated detox inpatient beds
- **Number of new detox beds** you're helping provide at St. Francis Farm: 10 (a 30% increase on current national detox provision)
- **Help for a hundred:** Number of men and women who can receive a 4-6 week medical detox as a result of the new beds: 100+ per year
- **On to rehab:** Number of residential clients the new St. Francis Farm will help at any given time, in detox and rehab: 24 (an increase of 14)

*Source: The Report of the HSE Working Group on Residential Treatment & Rehabilitation (Corrigan and O'Gorman, 2007)

Your help means hope.

...to Say Goodbye

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I'm glad it happened to me, and not any of the rest of them."

Years later, he was dealing and delivering drugs round the country in order to have money to use them. The self-destructive lifestyle took its toll. "If I had just gone to sleep and never woke up, I would have been happy."

At his brother-in-law's urging, Neil rang Merchants Quay's St. Francis Farm. "Basically, I begged them for help," he says. "I'll never forget it."

On the Farm, Neil began residential rehabilitation. Like all clients, he did a turn in the kitchen with Chef Ali (page 2), planning and preparing meals. "The food is fabulous," he laughs. "I've put on two stone!"

He credits counselling and therapeutic groupwork with helping him tackle the root causes of his drug use, adding, "staff

helped me turn my whole life around. I care now about helping out the little boy who was inside me, 'cause he was shut down a long time ago."

Like most clients, Neil also finds therapeutic the structured daily routine and farm chores. "It's no bother doin' a bit of hard work. I pick up a shovel, I'll do anything. I'm just happy to breathe the air again – fresh air."

Of the 14-week programme, he wishes it were longer – but is thrilled with the man he's become. He hopes to take college courses, and to one day return to St. Francis Farm. "I'd love to do voluntary work, if they'll have me. I'd like to give something back, for what people have done for me."

When asked how your support helps, Neil says, "There's a lot of people out there, that need help. If Merchants Quay weren't there, I would have killed myself through overdose. I'm not the old Neil I used to be."

Thank you for being our perfect match!

The results are in from Merchants Quay's first-ever Christmas match. And you, our brilliant supporters, made it a success:

- The first €50,000 was matched before Christmas, euro for euro, through your kind donations
- Our longtime supporter was so pleased with the initial results that a second €50,000 was pledged – matched, in January, as a direct result of your generosity

We're grateful for your donations, for your messages of hope and good cheer, and for taking time to ring us up. With demand for services greater than ever, these funds ensure no one has to go without help.

Thank you!

This acorn of kindness becomes a mighty oak:

If today was your last day... You could still change the world

Sow the seeds of tomorrow's miracles today, when you leave a gift to Merchants Quay Ireland in your will. Then the homeless and those caught in addiction will always have a place to turn for help, because of you.

Even if you already have a will, we can show you how easy it is. For details, you are very welcome to ring Denisa Casement on 01 524 0115.



Merchants Quay is now on Facebook: visit us for breaking news and client interviews.



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