# SIMONVOICES



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Welcome to our new look Simon Voices.

Let us know what you think. Your comments are always appreciated.

# Portraits of Homelessness

Simon Involvement and Action group want to change the way that people experiencing homelessness are portrayed.

There are different categories of homelessness. The pictures used are always of people sleeping in doorways or begging in the streets. This is only one of many homeless situations. Almost all the images of homeless people are of people not doing anything for themselves, just sitting helplessly, waiting for someone to do something for them, looking sad and dishevelled or smiling gratefully when receiving support. This is not who we are!



Billy PTL Weekes on wheels.

In most articles written about homelessness, pictures are used of people but not their names. We may be homeless but we are not nameless and we do have an identity. Interviewers want to hear the worst side of your story. The worst image is used to get people's sympathy. You feel like you don't have a choice whether your name is published in the article.



Sile Nic Niocaill on her summer balcony.



Michael Mackey umpiring a hurling match.

We think that images that don't tell the full story about us are damaging. People see someone homeless as different or 'other', not able to do anything for themselves, not able to change their situation. As a result they might not want to engage with us on an equal basis, and it makes it harder to access the services we have a right to, for example GP services, mental health, social welfare.

We believe it is time that the state of homelessness is shown differently. Our strengths and our normality whilst we are still homeless should also be represented. There should be a focus on when we are no longer homeless, showing pictures of all that we have achieved and the positivity in our lives for example training, working, volunteering, cooking for our friends, keeping fit and enjoying life.

A change of attitude in society is needed towards homeless people and more positive images should be shown so that we are treated the same as everyone else.

# **Feantsa Working Group on** Participation Meeting in Aalborg, **Denmark and Venice, Italy**



One of our group is a member of the Feantsa Working Group on Participation. He recently made two trips to Europe for meetings of the group, to Aalborg in Denmark and to Venice. Feantsa is a European grouping of national organisations working with homeless people. The working group focus on including homeless people in all aspects of homeless organisations.

People working in homeless organisations from Poland. Spain, UK, Italy, Romania, Scotland, Belgium, Denmark and Finland are members of this group. Mike Mackey from Galway is the only ex-homeless person in this group, the other members are people who work in homeless organisations. He is pushing for more homeless people to be in involved so that their experience can influence the work.

At each meeting there is an opportunity to visit a homeless service. In Aalborg, the group visited a residential centre which had a detox and rehab and a nursing home for homeless people. The centre also had two projects which enable people to



View of the Grand Canal and Basilica Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. Italy

get prepared for moving into their own place. They also provide work experience in a toy factory and a bicycle shop where bicycles are donated by the police and insurance companies, repaired and then sold to raise money for the centre. Food is provided and a cafe for people to relax in and to have a sleep if they need it.

Although Venice is a beautiful city there shortage no homelessness. The group visited a homeless service: it was a former hospital and had been converted into a home for eight people. They

have a group for client involvement for people who are getting ready for independent living.

At the meeting in Venice it was decided to change the membership of the Participation Working group to include more people who have experienced homelessness.

Mike says that "Being involved at that European level, it means that you are being listened to. The big thing would be that you are learning from different countries how homelessness operates, how they help people. Some homeless services are good and in other countries, it's not on the agenda."



Toy Factory Aalborg



Move On house in Aalborg

### **Mental Health and Homelessness**



**Dublin Simon Community** teamed up with the Mental Health Reform organisation to work on a mental health campaign project. They want to transform mental health services to make sure that they are available for everyone who needs them. As part of that work, a project was set up to find out how clients of Dublin Simon looked for help for their mental health difficulties and how being homeless affected their mental health.

Members of the Client Action Group carried out a survey to find out what kind of experiences led to mental health difficulties, how these difficulties led to homelessness, what were the barriers to getting help and what helped people to improve their well being.

In their interviews with clients they found that the experiences which led to mental health difficulties were often traumatic events, for example:

- The sudden death of a loved
- A difficult time with bereavement
- Emotional, physical and sexual abuse

These difficulties led to homelessness through repeated admissions to hospital, unstable accommodation, difficulties in living independently and people's needs not being met in supported accommodation. Being homeless then affected their mental health because of the stress of dealing with the previous traumatic events, feelings of loneliness and abandonment and the stresses of being homeless.

Some clients used alcohol and drugs to help them to lessen their mental distress and to numb the realities of being homeless. Feelings of hopelessness were common and difficulties in getting 'life back on track'.

Barriers to getting help were often related to:

- Feeling stigmatised by hospital staff
- Not having an address or a medical card
- Not having enough support
- Mental health needs not taking seriously enough
- Being discharged from hospital without support
- Lack of trust in counsellors
- Medication
- Difficulties in getting services including crisis supports

What helped people to improve their well being:

- Secure permanent housing
- Long term supports
- Coping and life skills
- Immediate access to mental health support
- Being supported by Dublin Simon Community

The report of the survey -Mental Health and Homelessness: Voices of **Experience** – was launched on 15th June 2017. At the launch, the group Homeless Adults Speak Out on Mental Health, suggested the following solutions:

- 24/7 access to mental health services for homeless people
- A 'No wrong door' policy so that homeless people can get help for both mental health and substance abuse

Deputy Helen Mc Entee TD spoke about a pilot programme of services in place for people experiencing homelessness at St. James and Mater hospitals with other hospitals to follow. She discussed providing additional GP and nursing supports and to provide guidance for staff working in homeless services.

The next stage in this project will be training for members of the Client Action group in campaigning for better mental health services. They want to make it easier for homeless people to get mental health services, to increase the amount of safe, secure accommodation and to make sure that people can have long term supports when they are living independently.





#### **March Hare**

The March hare is rare indeed
Few are seen in the land of green
Fighting for survival or better still renewal
Of the status quo between creatures and mankind
Needs to be addressed post haste
Before we descend into an unbalanced post waste
Always remember, never forget who was here first
Maybe it's time there were reimbursed
Paddy's Day is not very far away
Another revival and now worldwide event
Not bad for a Welsh lad of roman decent
Who fed swill to pigs on the Antrim Hills
The voices sang to him in the Welsh valleys
The rest is history a parade of mystery

**Martin O Brien** 

#### **A Seasonal Trot**

The March hare is near its end
Not to worry the April fool is around the bend
The mayflower brings a ray of sunshine
Continued no doubt by the blooms of June
If you're hot to trot July's your boy
Time for a break then shake for August
The summer's nearly over take a trip to Dover
End the season in style and become a wild rover
April showers will soon be upon us
Mixed with sunshine hopefully a buzz time
Plans for the summer suddenly take shape
All for the yearly 2 week escape
Back to the present leave the future to be
Living for now needs a seasonal bow

**Martin O Brien** 





#### The Wild Geese

Like the passing of time them are always around To inspire or provoke the folk of the day Add humor and spice things, don't look so grey Perhaps to remind us what it's all about Not to be obsessed with who has the shout To sing or recite is observed as light To be keep in check and only heard at night Songs and poems are like richness in words But let's not forget the creatures and birds Who add colour, variety and sound And inspiration to poets and singers alike A connection that perhaps is missing Maybe it's time listen to the geese hissing

Martin O Brien

## **SIAG Summer Outing Celebrating our 12th Anniversary**



In May on a wonderful sunny day we visited the National Stud Farm and Japanese Gardens in Kildare. Members of the group said...









Irish National Stud & Gardens, Kildare

### **Word Search: All About Horses**

Draw a line around fifteen hidden words. The words can go straight, forward or backward, on an angle forward, or straight up or down. The words you are looking for are listed in the box.

A	W	R	В	T	R	В	P	Q	S	S	A	R	G	QUARTER
S	Α	D	D	L	E	S	Α	Α	S	Т	Т	L	Т	SHETLAND
														SADDLES
D	L	H	R	P	T	R	N	R	5	A	1	1	A	CORRAL
N	K	R	Α	E	0	Р	Α	1	Ν	Т	Н	s	В	SHOW
														MORGAN
N	1	E	S	Т	T	T	T	C	R	C	U	R	S	WALKING
R	N	S	Н	W	L	R	N	Q	E	R	M	R	L	BRIDLE
														PASTURE
P	G	0	E	- 1	Ε	A	A	1	S	E	0	Н	E	RACE
A	S	S	Т	S	В	S	R	U	Р	Т	R	G	A	BIT
107.00							1000				71000			STRAW
P	A	Y	L	S	H	R	Т	R	Q	N	G	A	M	TROT
P	S	A	A	T	A	0	1	E	0	А	А	Α	D	PAINT
Н	Т	Н	N	R	н	1	W	D	R	С	Ν	0	R	WESTERN
														HAY
T	E	L	D	A	W	1	A	U	L	Ν	A	Ν	R	CANTER
P	А	N	S	W	N	Т	R	0	Т	E	А	D	W	PINTO
														BARN
E	0	N	T	E	N	G	S	M	R	Α	D	5	S	GRASS



## IF WE CAN DO IT -YOU CAN DO IT RECIPES

### **Cauliflower and Red Pepper** Stir Fry



Serves 4

#### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or extra light olive oil
- 1 medium/large red onion chopped cube size
- 1 cup red or yellow pepper chopped cube
- 1 medium chopped tomato if desired
- A sprinkle salt/sea salt
- 2 cups cauliflower florets chopped in small size (the smaller they are, the easier they are to cook)
- A teaspoon of paprika or a pinch of red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric powder
- Salt and pepper to taste or a couple of chillies

- 1. Heat the oil in a pan on medium high heat
- 2. Add cube sized chopped onion and pepper together, and stir until start to change colour (about 5 minutes). Then add turmeric and paprika
- 3. Add the chopped tomato if using and keep stirring until tender
- 4. Sprinkle a pinch of salt into the frying pan
- 5. Add chopped cauliflower
- 6. Let it cook while stirring (make sure the bottom of the pan does not burn), for 8-10 minutes. Add a little water or stock if it looks too dry

### **Bread and Butter Pudding**



Old bread

#### Ingredients

30g butter 8 bread slices 350ml whole milk 50ml double cream

2 eggs

25g granulated sugar 50g raisins

2 tsp cinnamon powder Nutmeg, grated, to taste

#### Method

- 1. Preheat the oven to 180C/355F/Gas 4.
- 2. Remove the edges off the bread. Spread butter on one side of each slice and then cut them into chunk sizes
- 3. Spread them in a large size baking dish

- greased with butter.
- 4. Crack the eggs into a medium bowl, add three quarters of the sugar and lightly whisk.
- 5. Warm the milk and cream together (don't let it boil or the custard will split) and then gently stir it into the beaten eggs along with the cinnamon and raisins
- 6. Pour the custard over the prepared bread layers, mix evenly and sprinkle with nutmeg and the remaining sugar and leave to aside for 15-20 minutes
- 7. Place the dish into the oven, in the middle and bake for 30-40 minutes, or until the custard has set and the top is golden.

### **Simon Voices** Needs You!



We want to hear from you. Please send your personal stories, opinions, poems, pictures or news to Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St Andrew's House, 28 - 30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2 or email catri.okane@simoncommunity.com If we publish your entry we will send you a €10.00 voucher, as a small thank you. We may not be able to publish everything we receive. Thank you to everybody who has sent in a contribution.

### Competition



Be in with a chance to win a €50 voucher! Can you work out the answer below?

What day of the year is 'Mid Summers Day' or the 'Summer Solstice'?

- A. May 21st
- B. June 21st
- C. July 21st

If you think you know the answer contact Simon Involvement and Action Group c/o Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, 28 -30 Exchequer Street Dublin 2. Or text you answer with your name to 0877993860. Or email catri.okane@simoncommunity.com. Closing Date 31st October 2017.