

# Simon Voices



Simon Speaking

## A Happy New Year to all our Readers!

## Come Along you can't go wrong!

When I was first asked to join the Simon Involvement and Action Group I was reluctant, but I was so glad that I woke up that miserable November morning to catch the 7.30 train. Like I said, I was reluctant, I thought, "why would they want me in the Group? And how I could make a valuable contribution"? But I was so wrong. I was made feel so welcome from the Group and both the facilitators Catri and Marian.

*I thought, "why would they want me in the Group? And how I could make a valuable contribution"? But I was so wrong.*

The Group is made up of people from the different Simon Communities. Before I joined I didn't actually know much about the other Communities. Every month we meet up in the

Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin and the meeting starts at 11.00 a.m. and we open with an ice-breaker, an exercise to help people feel comfortable. The ground rules are read out then we set the agenda. The agenda varies each month. For example every few months we discuss and plan the next Simon Voices newsletter. We always have the Community Round Up and if there's any other business we usually discuss that last, and we usually finish at about 3.30, oh and everything that is discussed is kept confidential.

We get a few breaks during the day, and we all stop working at one o'clock. Sandwiches and soup are served, usually with dessert afterwards. Everybody in the Group has a voice and we all make sure that we are heard. It's taken me a while to get to know the Group but they are one the kindest, sincerest, supportive Groups that I've ever been part of. Like I said earlier, the Group is made up of people from the different Communities and we



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all have different experiences, unique ideas and opinions.

There are also other advantages of being part of the Group, between March and May of last year, a bunch of us did an 'Introduction to Facilitation Skills' course that lasted twelve weeks, we learned so much and we bonded even more as a group. A couple of people from Focus Ireland did the course also.

We went on a group outing last summer, we went on a boat ride up

the Liffey, we had lunch afterwards. We also went to see some stuffed animals in the Natural History Museum.

We all have a common interest in the Group and we hope that we can make a difference in some one's life. So, if you are interested in joining the Group please come along, everybody is equal in the Group, no matter who you are or what your background is or was. You'll always be made feel welcome even if you stopped



coming for a few months. Your local Simon Community will even pay for your bus or train fare. We'll even arrange to meet you at the bus or train station in Dublin if you'd like us to.

## IT REALLY HAPPENED...

# Where There's A Will There's A Way

Peoples' remarks about the yellow look on my face have now stopped and I feel healthier than I ever did.

After over twenty years of chain smoking, smoking all kinds of tobacco.

Drying it out when it is wet just for a smoke, tearing my hair out when I did not have any.

8 months off them seems like a life - time habit kicked in the head.

Putting on weight that I needed, as I was under-weight while smoking.

Peoples' remarks about the yellow look on my face have now stopped and I feel healthier than I ever did.

How did I do it? I question myself sometimes. I got booklets & DVDs on how to Quit Smoking.

I rang the smokers' quit-line when I got cravings. That was my first attempt in years and I

lasted six week's going back to 2009.

My second attempt is still lasting which is now going on 8 months. The way I worked it out is - plan a date you are going to give them up, give yourself two or three weeks and work towards it while cutting yourself down and setting your goals towards that date.

You will probably need nicotine patches (prescribed by your doctor), chewing gum and maybe an inhaler from your Doctor, they will reduce half the battle for you.

Think of the positive side of it not the negative side.

You will have more money in your pocket, feel better, look brighter, no cigarette stains on your fingers or the stale smoke smell of your hair and clothes and furniture.

What I found very helpful was to avoid smokers until you feel strong enough, when your cravings are minimal and you feel confident enough not to pick up a cigarette.



**The National Smoking Quitline can be contacted at CallSave 1850 201 203**

**Lines are open Monday to Sunday 8am to 10pm**

**Smokers who ring the Quitline have the option of: availing of online counselling by trained staff, being referred for professional help in their own local area, or simply having an information pack sent to them by post.**

I thought I could never do it. If you feel the need to kick the habit, then talk to your doctor. Listen to encouraging people they will make you feel you are doing something worthwhile they will boost your confidence. As I said at the start, I didn't think I could do it but the longer you're off them the easier it gets.

Still have the odd cravings but fighting them to the end. Even if one person finds this article helpful then I feel it has been worthwhile. Hopefully this might help people to find the willpower to give up. Don't ever think there is no way of quitting, you will succeed be strong.

*James O'Flynn*

## WRITER'S CORNER

## Homeless for Christmas

You lie there scattered in the gutter, as you sing your merry Christmas lullabies,  
For you pissed up more than all those shaming you as you sing your lullabies.

As you wake after the storm as the cat scratches at your hat, it's only an empty  
bottle you hold, You say to hell with this way of life, as you trudge the dark road,  
to pull the gutter out that's inside you, For you law down no more.

Now you sing your Christmas lullabies sweeter than all the years before, your  
son knocks on your door, You've see so much more than all those who shamed  
you before, As you sing your Christmas lullabies.

*Brian Burke*

## Hopeless

I sleep rough  
To live every day in the elements  
you've got to be tough  
As I wake up I'm stressed  
My hearts beating against my chest  
As though it wants to escape  
From a tomb full of hate  
My mind gets irate  
It's the misery of being partners  
with this body that won't operate  
I'm in dire straits  
Thinking of things that I want to  
appreciate  
But I can't because of pain that  
won't go away for God sake  
The cold sends intense chills  
through my spine  
Straight into my mind

How through all this can I be kind?  
God I'm so sorry I wish I could  
rewind  
Back to the beginning and relive my  
life with peace of mind  
Wake up now you were sleeping  
Sleep you weren't really needing  
Just trying to get some freedom  
From the pain in this life you're  
leading  
Move your legs about to get back  
some feeling  
It's so cold throughout my being  
I need some make believe healing  
I have to get up for a smoke  
Some Whiskey after a toke  
And laugh all this off like a joke

*Andrew Bower*

*Robert Green*

## Homeless

I'm homeless  
It seems hopeless  
I keep winding up living out of a  
backpack  
Trying to figure out where I'm  
supposed to live and feel laid back  
It seems like there isn't a place in this  
world that can make me feel at home  
I'm losing hope  
And smoking too much dope  
I need a plan that will make cash  
To buy myself some class  
Nice clothes, new shoes, jewellery too  
And a BMW  
But I haven't got a wish to live  
I'm messed up and haven't got a lot

to give  
I'm just knocking back Whiskey trying  
to forget a lot of bad stuff  
These times for me are really tough  
If I could drown the scared memories  
that I've so far survived  
Then I wouldn't feel like revenge all  
the time  
Demons with missed placed blame  
From so much pain  
So hard to refrain  
I'm filled with hate  
My emotional fate  
I'm feeling more and more irate  
I smash a mirror while thinking about  
faith  
Looking in it reflects scars  
That makes bad memories impossible

*Andrew Bower*



## What If

What if your world disintegrates  
evaporates without a trace.  
When your life turns upside down  
your faced with sleeping on the ground,  
cardboard boxes for a bed  
concrete pillow for your head.

What if you find yourself alone  
devoid of friends and cozy home.  
Fate has clearly mapped your way,  
so delegates you as a stray.  
Demoted bottom of the heap,  
you find yourself out on the street.

What if you find all entrance blocked,  
before this moment you had mocked,  
that homelessness, plus being poor  
could only happen to next door.

What ever safeguards are in stow  
against this grim scenario,  
calamities can multiply,  
in the blinking of an eye.

## WRITER'S CORNER

### DEATH

Kinda like Santa Claus but without the toys,  
he'll visit when he wants to, arriving without noise.

He carries a list, but it matters not if you're naughty  
or nice,  
your numbers up and you must pay the price.

You can beg, plead, or even drop to your knees,  
but he doesn't understand the meaning of your  
word please.

He's older than humanity but that's nothing on  
time,  
you're not being punished, well, maybe if you  
committed a crime.

Only the truly wicked ones and you were in  
the wrong,

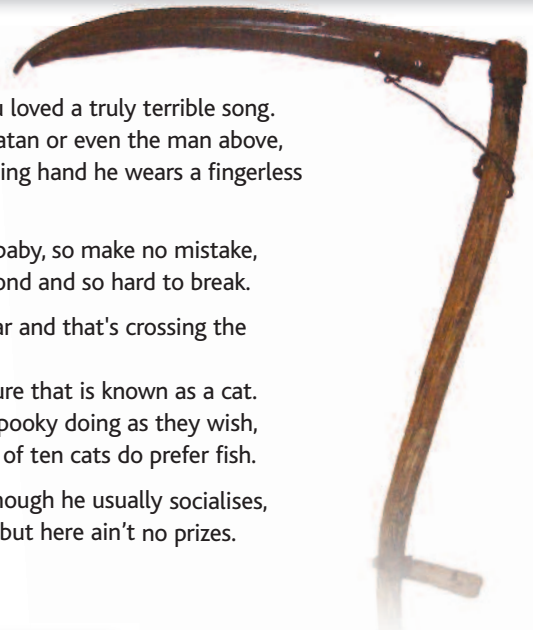
say for example, if you loved a truly terrible song.  
He doesn't work for Satan or even the man above,  
but on his scythe holding hand he wears a fingerless  
glove.

He's bad to the bone baby, so make no mistake,  
he's as tough as diamond and so hard to break.

But he does have a fear and that's crossing the  
path,  
of a four legged creature that is known as a cat.  
He believes they are spooky doing as they wish,  
well after all, nine out of ten cats do prefer fish.

He keeps to himself though he usually socialises,  
try to guess his name but here ain't no prizes.

*Alan Maguire*



## IT REALLY HAPPENED...

### Thank you Simon



Hello, this is James. I have been with Galway Simon for a while now and I have so much to be thankful for. When I first met Simon I was in a bad way. I had no home, no true friends but all the drink I could get. But when I met Simon I found a home, a proper way to live and I have never looked back. I know

that I found something special and don't ever want to lose it. I know that I have to keep on working on what I am doing.

I say Thank You Simon and all of the staff. Thank you Simon for everything you have done for me.

*James*

## We Want To Hear From You

We have had a lot of discussion about the name 'service user'. We don't think that the name service user is appropriate.

What do you think about it?

We would love to hear your suggestions for a different name. All suggestions will be considered for publication.

We would also like to hear your opinions on how you think we could end homelessness.

Please send your thoughts and ideas or any other opinions, personal stories, poems, news or art to:

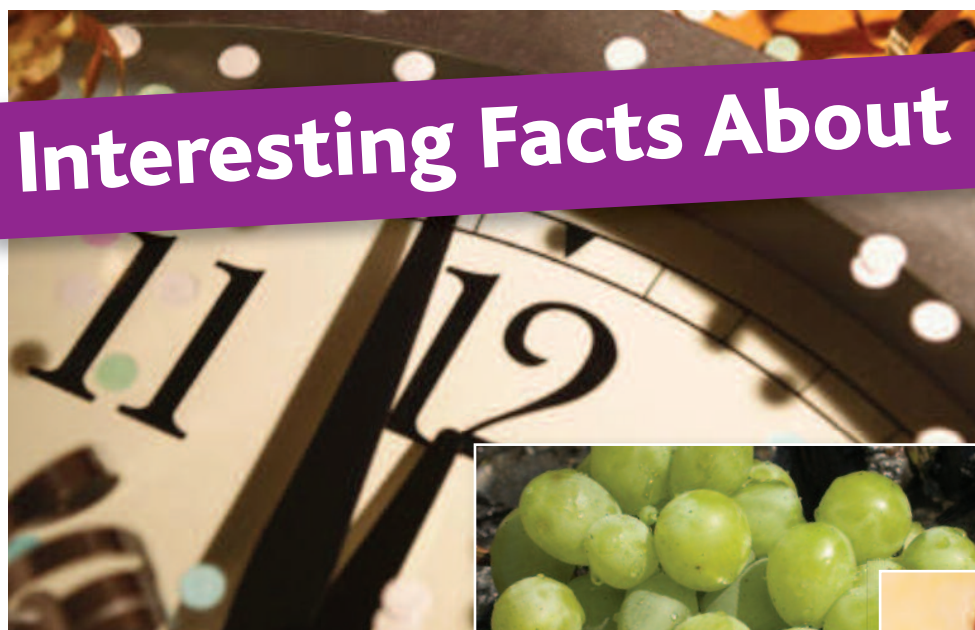
Simon Involvement and Action Group,

Simon Communities of Ireland,

28-30 Exchequer Street,  
Dublin 2.



# Interesting Facts About New Year



In Spain on New Year's Eve the ritual is to eat 12 grapes at Midnight. The tradition is meant to secure 12 happy months in the coming year.

On New Year's Eve the Dutch burn bonfires of Christmas trees on the street and launch fireworks. The fires are meant to purge the old and welcome the new.

Did you know that the tradition of setting New Year's resolutions dates back to the ancient Babylonians? Their most common resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment!

And did you know that today losing weight is the most common New Year's resolution?

Throughout the southern United States black eyed peas are eaten every New Year's day to bring good luck for the coming year.

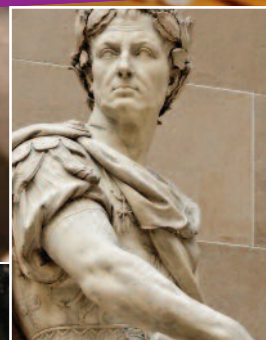


**Did you know that Julius Caesar was the first to set January 1st as the New Year?**

In Britain, when Big Ben strikes 12, everyone gathers around to sing 'Auld Lang Syne', a Scottish poem, literally meaning 'old long ago' or simply the 'good old days' – to remember old and new friends.

In Italy people wear red underwear on New Year's Day to bring good luck in the coming year.

In the United States the coming of the New Year is celebrated by the lowering of a gigantic crystal ball at Times Square.



In the Jewish New Year celebrations apples and honey are eaten to symbolise a sweet New Year.

Not all cultures and religions celebrate New Years day on January 1st, different cultures and religions celebrate New Years at different times throughout the year.

Old Irish New Years day was celebrated in Ireland during the Festival of Imbolc, also known as the Festival of Lights, on the 1st of February. This was a time of celebrating the re-awakening of the earth.



**COMPETITION**

**Be in with a chance to win a €50 voucher!**

All you have to do is answer the following question:

**ON WHAT DAY DOES ST VALENTINE'S DAY FALL?**

- A. February 14th
- B. March 1st
- C. October 11th

**How to Enter**

To be in with a chance of winning a 50.00 shopping voucher send your answers to Simon Action and Involvement Group, c/o Catrí O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St Andrew's House, 28 – 30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2.

Or text your answer to 0877993860

Closing date: March 31st 2012.

# LOOK AFTER YOURSELF BE HEALTHY

## Simple Lemon and Ginger Drink



- 2 lemons
- 3 teaspoons of chopped fresh ginger

### Method

- Put 2 pints of water into a saucepan. Add 2 roughly chopped lemons (unpeeled) and 3 teaspoons of chopped fresh ginger
- Bring to the boil and simmer for 1½ hours, strain into a mug and enjoy!
- This drink can be enjoyed hot or cold

- *Avoid fried foods as much as possible*
- *Eat lots of fruit and vegetables in a variety of colours*
- *Don't add salt when cooking*
- *Always shop after you have eaten. Shopping when you are hungry means you are more likely to buy high fat and high sugar foods*
- *Eat regularly, three main meals with one or two snacks daily*

**If we can do it –  
you can do it recipes**

## Healthy Brown Bread



- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 2 tablespoons of treacle
- 4 mugs of course whole wheat flour
- 1 cup of bran
- 1 cup of wheat germ
- 1 fistful of pinhead oatmeal, and some extra for dusting
- 1 fistful of any nuts/grains of your choice e.g. chopped walnuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds
- 1 teaspoon bread soda
- Buttermilk - approximately 2 mugs

### Method

- Melt the butter and treacle in a large saucepan, add in all the dry ingredients and mix in enough buttermilk to make the mix wet
- Grease two loaf tins and divide the mixture between the two, sprinkle some pinhead oatmeal on top of the mix
- Bake in a preheated oven at 180° for 35 minutes
- When cooked put on a wire rack and cover with a tea towel until cool
- For some sweetness, add sugar to taste

*Recipes provided by Trish Cosgrove*