

# Simon Voices



## Simon Users Speaking

## Welcome to our Christmas 2012 edition

It's hard to believe another year is over. *Simon Involvement and Action Group* have been busy during the past year:

- New people have joined us and our long term members have continued their involvement
- We celebrated our seventh anniversary in May
- Our voices were heard in Brussels. One of our members expressed our ideas and opinions at the 11th meeting of People Experiencing Poverty at the 'Homelessness and Housing Rights in the Context of the Crisis' Conference
- We visited Dublin



Simon Rehab and Detox Unit

- We hosted members from Dublin Simon Development Group
- Our summer outing was a great success with a visit to the National Gallery and a walk around the city
- We continue to discuss issues around homelessness, services and the experiences of people in the Group

## 'It's only one day!'

We know that Christmas can be a lonely time for some people, so we thought we'd share some tips that have worked for us.

- 1** Keep in contact with the people closest to you. Find out who else is going to be on their own and plan to get together if possible.
- 2** Make sure you have credit on your phone so you can talk to people over the holidays.
- 3** Planning ahead has worked for us, stocking up on books and DVDs from the library, checking out what is on TV so we don't miss our favourite programmes.
- 4** Find out if there is anything going on locally, carol singing, opportunities to volunteer etc. Have the contact details of support services (that are open) at hand. Reach out if you need to. Plan ahead, you could start taking action now.
- 5** If you are not feeling festive remember, there are many others feeling the same, you are not alone. Try to treat it as a normal day.
- 6** And remember it's not going to last forever, 'it's only one day'.

Why don't you join us? If you are interested, talk to a member of staff. We always welcome new members.

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## Participation in Bucharest

Hi, my name is Mike and I am part of the Galway Simon Action Group and Simon Involvement and Action Group. I am also part of FEANTSA Participation Working Group. FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. The group meets twice a year in countries all around Europe. We met this year in Glasgow back in February, and most recently in Bucharest in September.

One of the issues raised in Bucharest was to get homeless people involved in Strategic Planning at a National level, and to have training provided around this.

Also we were invited to a homeless hostel for families. These families stay in the center for one year, during this time the father must seek work so that the family can eventually move into their own accommodation. We noticed on our visit to this homeless hostel the stigma homeless people experience on a daily basis.

The children of the hostel were not allowed, because of their background, to attend schools. This was a horrible realisation. (We were later informed that this problem was solved due to pressure from a Government official).

We had an opportunity to discuss with parents their experience of being homeless in Romania. There were families who could not find any emergency accommodation and on a daily basis they would call to the hostel looking for hope of a bed for the night only to be turned away.

We also experienced what Romanians call 'Bush People' these are people who are long term homeless. Many of these people have died due to sleeping out (in bushes) for long periods of time.

The next meeting of the FEANTSA Participation Working Group will take place in Galway in March 2013.

Michael Mackey

## It's Possible...



Michael Mackey with Liam O'Neill, President of the GAA being presented with an All Ireland medal for being an umpire at the replay of the All Ireland Minor Hurling Final, September 30th 2012

## Five Ways to Stay Healthy This Winter (From NHS Choices UK Online)

### Get Plenty Of Sleep

"On average we sleep six-and-a half hours a night, much less than the seven to nine hours recommended" says Jessica Alexander, spokesperson at the Sleep Council, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of a good night's sleep to health and well being. But in winter, we naturally sleep more, due to the longer nights. "It's perfectly natural to adopt hibernating habits when the weather turns cold" says Jessica. "Use the time to catch up."



### Drink More Milk

You are 80% more likely to get a cold in the winter so making sure your immune system is in tip-top condition is important. Milk and dairy products such as cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais are great sources of protein and vitamins A and B12. They're also an important source of calcium, which helps keep our bones strong. Try to go for semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, rather than full fat, and low-fat yoghurts. (If you are dairy intolerant, talk to your Doctor about possible alternatives)



### Eat More Fruit and Veg

When it's cold and dark outside it can be tempting to fill up on unhealthy comfort food, but it's important to ensure that you still keep your diet healthy and include five portions of fruit and veg a day. If you find yourself craving a sugary treat, try a juicy orange instead or sweet dried fruits such as dates or raisins. Winter vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, swede and turnips can be roasted, mashed or made into soup for a comforting winter meal.



### Try New Activities

Don't use the cold winter months as an excuse to stay in and lounge around. Instead get out and try a new activity, or take a bracing winter walk. Regular exercise helps to control your weight, boost your immune system and is a good way to break the tension that can build up if you are constantly cooped up inside the house.



### Have a Hearty Breakfast

Winter is the perfect season for porridge. Eating a warm bowlful on a cold morning isn't just a delicious way to start the day; it also helps you to boost your intake of starchy foods and fiber, which give you energy and help you feel fuller for longer, stopping the temptation to snack mid-morning. Oats also contain lots of vital vitamins and minerals. Make your porridge with semi-skimmed or skimmed milk or water, and don't add sugar or salt. Add a few dried apricots, some raisins, a sliced banana or other fruit for extra flavor and to help you hit the five-a-day target.





## Gnus

You're poems are lousy she hollered  
Stupid, short, silly second rate poems

Poems about beer filled Gnus, paddling in home  
carved canoes, whilst singing the blues  
What the heck are Gnus any way and why would  
they be drunk singing  
The blues, while paddling in home crafted canoes?  
Before I could explain, she had a go about the genre  
of my poems  
But they're genre-busting baby I whined  
They're genre shattering I bleated, they don't follow  
any particular style or groove baby

This made her fume  
This made her seethe, see red, and shout  
obscenities that would shock the most hardened of  
seafaring men

Seafaring, god fearing, manly, mustached, masculine  
men  
Men without names such as Bill and Gavoor  
Men without hobbies  
And who were usually poor  
But these men without names such as Shirley and  
Stance  
Knew how to tango, to swivel and dance

Who could sing deep and high  
But would never get high  
On drugs or booze  
Because they loved to make  
canoes  
And then sell them to, some  
gullible Gnus

Alan Maguire



## My Journey from Despair to Here

I came to Galway  
with bags in hand  
All my possessions in just one hand  
My hopes and dreams  
had long since gone  
Full of despair  
I arrived in Eyre Square  
My journey in recovery  
was oh so near

As the rain lashed down  
on my sordid frown  
Through the cold wind and rain  
I came to a door over in Newcastle  
There was the outstretched hand of Simon  
with a friendly smile & a gentle warm glow

I knew there and then it was the right place to go  
Well since I came in  
I've started to grin  
coz my hopes and dreams are back once more  
With the support and care of Simon so fair  
I've rid my life of total despair  
With counseling and support with a friendly voice  
chasing away the tears of despair

As I walk with confidence once more  
I feel whole again, I can walk with my head held high  
It's like I've a whole new world to explore

It's all clear to me now  
I made the right choice  
Simon I applaud you  
For giving me a life

Mike F



The Simon gave me a new lease of life at 55. They made me see I wasn't too late to start over again. They made me aware of my alcohol problem, which I didn't realise. I never realised people could be so caring and they are always there for me. I believe organisations like the Simon should be more supported by the public and other charities. Without them I would be still homeless and a drunk at the side of the street. With this new lease of life it has made me see I have a choice of two. I can go back to the old lifestyle or move on with the support of caring Simon Staff to move on in life. At 55 it's not too late; I believe that this is going to be a better lifestyle than the last 55 years. I could never be thankful enough to the staff.

Oliver Fitzsimons

## Easy Beef Stew



A medium or large pot with a lid

One large potato

One onion

One leek

One carrot

Handful of mushrooms

Tin of chopped tomatoes

Half a pound of cubed beef stew meat or neck of lamb

Salt & pepper

2 beef stock cubes or

2 beef oxa cubes

### METHOD

**1** Chop the onion, leek and carrot into pieces.

**2** Put the cubed meat into a large pot and add all the chopped vegetables, except the potato and mushrooms. Cover well with water and bring to the boil on a high heat, then reduce the heat and simmer for half an hour, with the lid on. (Keep checking it doesn't boil dry, add more water if necessary)

**3** Add the tomatoes, chopped potato, mushrooms and crush in the stock cubes and stir. Simmer gently for another 45 minutes (Again keep checking it doesn't boil dry, add more water if necessary)

**4** After 45 minutes check that the meat is cooked, if so, season with salt and pepper to taste and serve hot.

## Microwave Banana Pudding



100g butter, softened

2 ripe bananas

100g of brown sugar

100g of self raising flour

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

2 eggs

2 tablespoon milk

### METHOD

**1** Put the butter in a small microwavable dish and microwave on high for 30 secs-1min until melted.

**2** Add 1 ½ bananas, mash into melted butter, and then add the sugar, flour, cinnamon, eggs & milk. Mix together well.

**3** Slice remaining banana over the top, then return to the microwave and cook on high for 8 minutes until cooked through and risen. Serve warm, dusted with icing sugar, if you like, with a drizzle of toffee sauce and a scoop of ice cream. Delicious!

## Competition

Rearrange the letters below to reveal the name for a famous Christmas character!

**ASTAN UCSAL**

### 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 Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St Andrew's House, 28 – 30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2.** Or text your answer to 087 799 3860 or email to [catri.okane@simoncommunity.com](mailto:catri.okane@simoncommunity.com).

Closing Date 31st January 2013. This competition is open to people who are currently in Simon services or have been in Simon services.

## Simon Voices Needs You!

We want to hear from you. Please send your personal stories, opinions, poems, art or news to Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St Andrew's House, 28-30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2 or email to [catri.okane@simoncommunity.com](mailto:catri.okane@simoncommunity.com).

We may not be able to publish everything we receive. Thank you to everybody who has sent in a contribution. Sorry if it has not been included in this issue.