

Season's greetings to all our readers

This is our Christmas edition of Simon Voices.



Issue 16 Winter 2014

Simon Voices



Simon Speaking

'My Voice Your Voice Our Voice' Client Involvement Conference

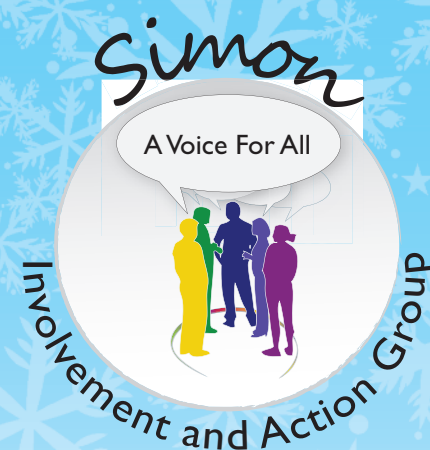


Simon Involvement and Action Group (SIAG) held the first Conference organised by clients for clients on November 19th in the Ashling Hotel Dublin. The theme of the event was 'Client Involvement'. Client involvement means clients getting involved in decision making in the local Simon Communities by, for example, attending house meetings, sharing information on how and where a person can get involved, joining a client group, organising events and outings, highlighting issues that are important to clients and making sure they are followed up, being a part of planning groups and becoming a member of the Board of Directors.



The event opened with Andy Williams from St Mungo's Broadway (London) talking about the different opportunities clients have to be involved including their Recovery College (which provided training courses run in a very flexible way) and the 'Outside In' client group. There was then small group discussions and Question and Answer sessions with Andy. People described his input as 'very inspiring' and 'an excellent eye opener as to what can be done'.

This was a Conference with a difference not only as it was client led but also because at lunch time people could listen to live music, take a Tai Chi class, make colourful clay



models, have a fabulous relaxing massage and even sign up for an email address.

In the afternoon, information was shared about how people are involved in the local Simon Communities and in SIAG and again there was a lot of discussion and feedback about what had been heard. One person said 'What has stood out for me most today is all that is going on in the different Simon Communities'.

Over sixty people attended on the day, a great turn out, and each one contributed to the day being a great success. The feedback was very positive with people saying they wanted to take back what they had heard to their Communities, that they had made new friends and that they hoped to meet again at another such event.

We would like to thank Electric Aid for sponsoring this Conference.



IN THIS ISSUE...

**Galway Simon
Client Involvement
Strategy** on page 3.

**Writer's & Artists
Corner**
Trip to Dublin Zoo
on page 4.

**Irish
Christmas Traditions**
on page 5.

Me, Myself and I (maybe a friend?) on Christmas Day



You might think I'm mad, but I love to get up on Christmas morning and cook breakfast – the whole spread, rashers and all. There's something lovely and homely about the waft of cooking in your home. It makes you hungry and you feel fulfilled after a good breakfast.

Then I shower, throw on my glad rags, my best, of course and pop into the local church. If mass is on I'd stay for a while and look at the beauty of the crib and the little children's faces, happy and agog at all they see around them, Christmas lights and all. It's amazing what you see in a happy child's face, so innocent.

I am innocent to my addiction, but I'm happy and there are so many other beautiful things this life has to offer. If you have your health, you're doing great. I had bad health for a while, due to alcohol addiction. But look at me now, I may have put on a bit of a tummy but I'll soon lose that and as I was told by a close friend "It suits you, something to grab onto. You look better with a bit of weight". I don't know whether I agree but I am happy the way I am and will make sure I give up the ice cream (maybe after Christmas).

I am talking to your heart now. Do something that warms your heart and achieve something this Christmas that you never dreamed you'd do – something nice for you, because you are nice.

We are all nice human beings and deserve nice things. Remember you are unique!

So this Christmas, if you find yourself alone, try to invite a friend or neighbour to your home. It will lighten the load and keep your mind occupied, getting things prepared and doing a bit of light cooking for you and your mate.

Even if you are sitting by yourself this Christmas, as I was many a time. It's not so bad. Treat yourself to everything you like!

Go for a walk, it's amazing who you meet on Christmas day. Buy yourself a good book, that's what I love. I get ready and cuddle up and get stuck in and the day just passes so quick. It's only a day, you can make it a lovely day. Put the effort in. Go on! Hang up those decorations!

I say a little prayer and meditate, play some music to relax. I write about the day, putting down my thoughts helps me and keeps me happy remembering all the happy events around Christmas time and in life. It makes me laugh!

It's not so bad after all. It's a good cozy day. Go on, be a happy laughing Santa this year!

I wish you one and all, sitting cozy reading this- A Very Merry, Warm, Happy Christmas this year and always.

Be Happy!

Shelley

Christmas Word Search



Angels
Candy cane
Chestnuts
Children
Cookies
December
Decorate
Frosty
Nativity
Noel
Ornaments
Peppermint
Reindeer
Shepherds
Sleigh
Snow

Fruitcake
Gifts
Glitter
Jesus
Jingle
Joseph
Manger
Mary
Snowman
Star
Stocking
Tree
Wisemen



Galway Simon launches Client Involvement Strategy



David Foley (staff) and Michael Mackey (client)

The Client Involvement Strategy is a 3 year plan that was put together by clients and staff of the Galway Simon Community to get clients more involved in all areas of Galway Simon. A workshop and two meetings with clients and staff were held at the beginning of the year, and questionnaires were sent out, to make sure that everyone could have their say on how clients could be more involved in Galway Simon.

A working group of clients, staff and management was set up to work on the plan in detail.



Willie Conroy

The plan was launched at a Music Night, organised by the Simon Action Group, that was held during Simon week in October. Members of the working group spoke at the launch and copies of the plan

were handed out. The evening was a great success.

The plan has six aims which describe the work that Galway Simon will do to get clients more involved:



Aim 1:

Make sure that clients are involved in a service that:

- Finds out how clients want to spend their time
- Gets better at getting clients in to education and training
- Supports clients to find and keep a job

Aim 2:

Develop opportunities for clients to volunteer in Galway Simon Community

Aim 3:

Set up more opportunities for clients to take the lead, support each other and have a say in how their services are run

Aim 4:

Make sure that more clients can get involved in making decisions about the running of Galway Simon Community

Aim 5:

Involve clients more in hiring staff

Aim 6:

Make sure that clients are aware of how they can get involved and what difference this makes



Trip to Dublin Zoo



Six of us journeyed to Dublin Zoo. We set off from Galway in the morning, on the 8 o'clock train. There was sunshine and showers all through the day. We got on one of the new trains, the scenery passing was fantastic. There was refreshments on the train, tea coffee and sandwiches. We arrived in Heuston station fresh and excited and made our way by taxi through the Phoenix park. The sea lions were first on display. From there we went to the safari enclosure which was full of elephants, giraffes, tigers,

rhinos and monkeys. But suddenly the heavens opened and it poured rain. We had to duck for cover. After the tour of the zoo, we decided to go for a meal in the zoo café. There was a great selection of burgers, chips, chicken and the food was delicious. As we finished our meal we made our way out of the zoo. The taxi never arrived so we decided to stroll through the park down through Cunningham road into Parkgate street then over the bridge into Heuston. We hopped on the

Writers and Artists corner

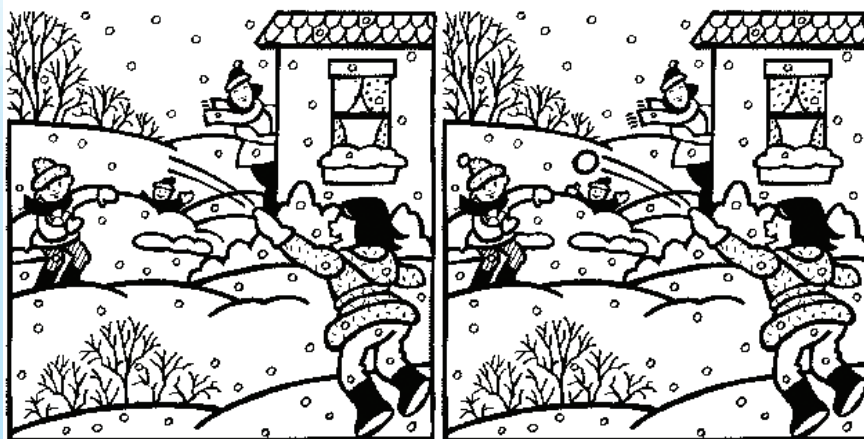


train and we were exhausted from our day but enjoyed it immensely.

*Words and pictures by
Willie Conroy,
Galway Simon*



Winter Fun Spot the 5 differences





Irish Christmas Traditions

Ireland, like most countries, has a number of Christmas traditions that are all of its own. Many of these customs have their root in the time when the Gaelic culture and religion of the country were being suppressed and it is perhaps because of that they have survived into modern times.

The candle in the window

The placing of a lighted candle in the window of a house on Christmas Eve is still practised today. It has a number of purposes but primarily it was an symbol of welcome to Mary and Joseph as they travelled looking for shelter.

The candle also indicated a safe place for priests to perform mass, as during Penal Times this was not allowed.

A further element of the tradition is that the candle should be lit by the youngest member of the household and only be extinguished by a girl bearing the name 'Mary'.

The laden table

After evening meal on Christmas Eve the kitchen table was again set and on it were placed a loaf of bread filled with caraway seeds and raisins, a pitcher of milk and a large lit candle. The door to the house was left unlatched so that Mary and Joseph, or any wandering traveller, could avail of the welcome.

The wren boy procession

During Penal Times there was once a plot in a village against the local soldiers. They were surrounded and were about to be ambushed when a group of wrens pecked on their drums and awakened the soldiers. The plot failed and the wren became known as 'The Devil's bird'.

On St. Stephens day a procession takes place where a pole with a holly bush is carried from house to house and families dress up in old clothes and with blackened faces. In olden times an actual wren would be killed and placed on top of the pole.

This custom has to a large degree disappeared but the tradition of visiting from house to house on St. Stephens Day has survived and is very much part of Christmas.

Decorations:

The placing of a ring of holly on doors originated in Ireland as holly was one of the main plants that flourished at Christmas time and which gave the poor ample means with which to decorate their dwellings.

All decorations are traditionally taken down on Little Christmas (January 6th.) and it is considered to be bad luck to take them down beforehand.

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Little Christmas

(Irish: Nollaig Bheag) is one of the traditional names in Ireland for 6 January, more commonly known in the rest of the world as the Feast of the Epiphany. It is sometimes thought that it is called this because under the older Julian calendar, Christmas Day celebrations fell on that day whereas under the Gregorian calendar it falls on 25 December. It is the traditional end of the



Christmas season and until 2013 was the last day of the Christmas holidays for both primary and secondary schools in Ireland.

Little Christmas is also called Women's Christmas (Irish: Nollaig na mBan), and sometimes Women's Little Christmas. The tradition, still very strong in Cork and Kerry is so called because of the Irish men taking on all the household duties for the day. Most women hold parties or go out to celebrate the day with their friends, sisters, mothers, and aunts. Bars and restaurants serve mostly women and girls on this night. Children often buy presents for their mothers and grandmothers.



Fish Bake



- 1 - 2 fillets of fish (haddock, cod or other white fish)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ teaspoon herbs (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Heat oven to 375° F / 190° C degrees.
- 2 Grease a 9 x 13 inch baking dish.
- 3 Season the fish fillets with herbs and salt and pepper.
- 4 Place the fish fillet(s) in the baking dish and top with butter. Cover with tin foil.
- 5 Bake for 20-30 minutes until the fish flakes easily with a fork (that's when its cooked).
- 6 Enjoy with potatoes and peas!

Fruit Flan



- Flan case
- 300 mls double cream
- Fresh fruit or tin of fruit cocktail

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Whip the double cream in a bowl along until it's quite stiff but do not over beat as it will start turning yellow into butter!
- 2 Add cream to the flan case and spread evenly then add the fruit on top.
- 3 Enjoy!

Competition

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

Can you work out the answer to the riddle below?

I'm in the middle of water and you can drink me!

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 your answer to 0877993860

Or email catri.okane@simoncommunity.com

Closing date: February 28th 2015

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 to catri.okane@simoncommunity.com

If we publish your entry we will send you €10.00 phone credit (any network) as a small thank you. This does not apply to SIAG members.

We may not be able to publish everything we receive. Thank you to everybody who has sent in a contribution.

