

CORK PENNY DINNERS

*An Open Door. A Warm Welcome.
A Hot Meal.*

If you blink, you miss it. A small door located on a side street just a few hundred feet from the River Lee. But once you find the wooden sign on Little Hanover Street and catch the welcoming smell of roast turkey, you'll find your way to the compassionate and delicious work of Cork Penny Dinners.



Cork Penny Dinners is one of the oldest charity organizations in Cork. Established in the 1840s to assist those affected by the Famine, it has remained a beacon of hope in Cork. In an atmosphere of warmth and support, the kitchen's volunteers produce meals for hungry people in Cork 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

"We believe everyone has a place in this world," says Catriona Twomey, longtime volunteer and all-around "mother hen" at Cork Penny Dinners. "Our job here is to make that place welcoming and warm. We ask no questions. We pass no judgment. We're here to look after them."

Regardless of their ability to pay, guests begin arriving in the morning and continue to come throughout the day and into the evening. The door is open and there are fresh flowers on the table. There is no set time for people to come or go and the delicious hot meals are provided as needed. One of the first things you notice is the comfortable camaraderie that exists between the volunteers and the guests. Jokes are exchanged, coffee is passed hand-to-hand, and conversation flows easily between those at the tables and those in the kitchen. In the face of the hard times, everyone there appreciates this positive place and what it brings to the community.

Lately, the hard times have become harder. "Just two years ago we were serving 150 meals over the course of five days a week," says Catriona. "With the recession and the hard times, we're now open every day and serving over 1,000 meals a week.

And the people coming in have changed. Now it's families, younger people, and mothers with children. So we're not only offering hot meals here, but now preparing meals to take-out for those who don't wish to bring children inside. The need has really increased and we're bursting at the seams." Cork Penny Dinners hopes to relocate its space in order to accommodate the increased demand for its services. Its current location has very little storage and no central heating, remaining almost unchanged for decades. The organization is currently fundraising for a new facility and is more than half-way to their funding goals.

Cork Penny Dinners relies entirely on voluntary contributions to operate. Funding from The Ireland Funds *Promising Ireland* Campaign is helping Cork Penny Dinners continue its mission for the people of Cork.



"We are really grateful to The Ireland Funds. The support has made a huge difference to us. The Ireland Funds have given us money that we can plan with and that becomes a safety net. For the people that come to eat, it means that there will always be something there for them."

—*Catriona Twomey, Cork Penny Dinners volunteer*

