

# Cuan Mhuire



Conquering Addiction With  
**a New Direction**



“WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO THE IRELAND FUNDS FOR THE VERY GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION IT HAS MADE TO CUAN MHUIRE AND FOR HELPING US TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS”

*—Sister Consilio, Founder of Cuan Mhuire*

With help from The Ireland Funds, Cuan Mhuire is restoring hope across Ireland and Northern Ireland. Since its formation in 1966, Cuan Mhuire has compassionately treated over 100,000 people with drug, gambling, and alcohol addictions. It is now the largest program of its kind on the island of Ireland.

At any one time, Cuan Mhuire is overseeing 600 people in treatment at centres in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Life skills and personal development are emphasized in their residential program of total abstinence from substances as Residents restore their self-confidence, self-respect and a sense of responsibility. Cuan Mhuire believes there are no hopeless cases.

All faiths, cultures and traditions are warmly welcomed. 12-week and 20-week programs are offered and support encompasses families as well. After-treatment for up to two years is regarded as vital and the program encourages Residents to embrace their uniqueness, inherent goodness and purpose in life.

### *Stories of Recovery:*

## Gráinne

Day one was horrific. I was coming crashing down after drinking as much as I could before I arrived. However, I felt straight away that I was in the right place. I was relieved to know that there was somewhere that I could go and that there were people willing to help someone like me. That's a huge thing when you're as far down as I was the day I came through those gates."

"I came from a family where my father was an alcoholic and I started drinking in my teens. In my 20s it went from every now-and-again to drinking socially but eventually I ended up here at Cuan Mhuire in a bad state. I'm married and I have four children. It was devastating and really tough for my family. I didn't think I was doing any harm, but it's amazing then when you come in here, work the program, and look at yourself. You finally see what's really going on.

When I got to Cuan Mhuire, I didn't really care whether I lived or died. I was taken care of. I was looked after. I was treated like a decent human being when, to be honest, I wasn't feeling like one. But every day after the first day was a little bit better even though sometimes there was only a tiny improvement. It wasn't easy. The hope started, something that I hadn't felt for a long time."

## Mark

"I completed the Cuan Mhuire 20-week drug program. I came from an alcoholic family so I had a lot of fear growing up. There was a lot of violence in the house. I was 15 when I started stealing my parents' sleeping pills and taking tablets to cope. I was 18 when I started to drink and I was taking a lot of drugs as well. Nobody knew. I kept my addiction very hidden for a lot of years.

I remember going into town and saying, 'is it worth it?' I was about to collect two weeks of pay knowing I could have a few good days and then I'm back to square number one. Do I really want that kind of life? I lost everything. I was seeing doctors. I lost the job, I lost the car, and I lost my flat. I was more or less homeless. In the height of depression, I saw no way out. It was my moment of acceptance that change had to be made.

I did the 20-week program here at Cuan Mhuire and that was two and a half years ago. I haven't used since."

## THE IMPACT OF THE IRELAND FUNDS' SUPPORT

THIS IMPACT IS MADE POSSIBLE BY DONORS OF THE IRELAND FUNDS WHO ARE DEDICATED TO MISSION OF CUAN MHUIRE. MANY OF THESE DONORS HAVE FAMILY OR CLOSE FRIENDS WHO HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY THE CHALLENGES OF ADDICTION AND THEREFORE HAVE A DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THE VALUE AND WORK OF THIS UNIQUE ORGANIZATION.

**Cuan Mhuire, Bruree** a grant of €76,296 from The Ireland Funds was used towards the **upgrade of facilities** for Residents in the Drug Rehabilitation Unit and it built a conservatory for Residents. In addition, Cuan Mhuire, Bruree was able to refurbish an old cottage from 1882 to provide **accommodation for homeless persons**.

**Cuan Mhuire, Ballybay** a grant of €5,000 from The Ireland Funds provided **work therapy and training facilities** in the field of horticulture for those in recovery.

**Cuan Mhuire, Newry** a grant of €22,000 from The Ireland Funds enabled them to develop **work therapy and training units for Residents**, including poly tunnels, recycling facilities and a wood workshop. These facilities provide skills training to Residents which is part of a **skill-building pathway** for those who are marginalized or unemployed.

**Cuan Mhuire, Gardiner St.** a grant of €15,183 from The Ireland Funds enabled them to refurbish their much-needed **kitchen and dining facilities**.

**Cuan Mhuire, Athy** a long-held goal of Cuan Mhuire, Athy has been the establishment of a **40-bed female treatment and rehabilitation unit**. The Ireland Funds has given a grant of €227,148 towards this much needed facility. Total cost of the project is estimated at €2 million. Planning permission has been obtained and work will commence in 2019.

A STONE SCULPTURE CARVED BY A RESIDENT IN RECOVERY AND TRAINING.

“SISTER CONSILIO HAS MADE SUCH A DIFFERENCE IN THOUSANDS OF LIVES. IT IS MY GREAT HONOR TO KNOW HER AND SEE FIRST-HAND THE MIRACLES SHE PERFORMS EVERY DAY WITH THE PEOPLE IN HER CARE. SISTER HAS ONLY ONE AGENDA, TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL.”

—John Driscoll, Boston-area Donor

# The Power that is Sister Consilio

Photos: Aergus McMahon

**“I never intended on starting a place like this. It wasn’t advisable, but it happened anyway.”**

Such is the faith of Sister Consilio, founder of Cuan Mhuire. Initially as a young nurse in Cork and later as a nun with the Sisters of Mercy in Co. Kildare, she continually came across people with struggles who gravitated to her and her ability to love and listen.

“I trained as a nurse before joining the Sisters of Mercy,” explains Sr. Consilio. “I was at St. Vincent’s Hospital which was more or less a county home as well. Men would come in off the road with alcohol problems and we looked after them. I always found myself thinking, ‘how would my mother feel if this was my brother?’”

Her reputation as a caregiver preceded her as she became a novitiate with the Sisters of Mercy. People struggling with addictions started coming to the convent, seeking her compassion and care. Family members often came as well, seeking advice. Suddenly it seemed, she was running a recovery program.

“I had families and folks arriving for help. I had them in the garden and in parlors throughout the convent, trying to hide them from 64 nuns!” laughs Sr. Consilio. “When the Mother was waking up and coming downstairs, I was going up the stairs to bed!”

The needs grew too large to hide from 64 nuns and so her mission was embraced. The program expanded to a dairy on the grounds of the convent and later, with the help of her brother John, expanded to five full residential centers and three transitional houses. To this day, Agnes, Sister Consilio’s biological sister as well as a fellow Sister of Mercy, also assists with the work of the centers.

“People come here thinking they’re no good,” Sr. Consilio says quietly. “but I say, ‘let us look at what is beautiful and good in you.’ God never made you wrong. Not everyone can hear what’s in their soul...so we help them listen.”

**What’s Next? Friends of Cuan Mhuire** As Cuan Mhuire graduates people back to their communities, support is needed as local as possible. Their after-care program for Residents and their families lasts for two years and the ability to travel for that care can be a challenge. Cuan Mhuire has established “Friends of Cuan Mhuire” centers in towns across Ireland for this support and it is the hope of Sr. Consilio and her team that every town in Ireland someday will offer this network of support.