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A Reflection on Hospitality
From DePaul Ireland

CHRISTINE LITTLEFIELD
Who We Are

Depaul Ireland was established because there was unmet need in Ireland and Northern Ireland. There was a significant population of people who were homeless and known to have an active addiction. As a result, although homeless, these individuals were denied access to critical services that were otherwise provided to the homeless. Thus, those who needed the support of homeless services the most were denied access or excluded once the nature of their need and addiction was identified. In 2002, Depaul Ireland was founded to address this unmet need and to ensure that this marginalized population was given the support and services that it so desperately needed. Depaul Ireland is now a leading cross-border organization in Ireland and Northern Ireland, providing services in both jurisdictions. Hospitality is at the forefront of the work and service that Depaul Ireland offers. By serving those people who are most in need in society and providing them the opportunity to realize their true potential, Depaul Ireland has made a significant contribution to the lives of those they have served.

Our Approach and Who We Support through Hospitality

Our approach and ethos stem from our Vincentian values, which are rooted in the work of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, who were both champions of justice. We are therefore part of a 400-year tradition of hospitality and service to those who are the most marginalized in our community. Our core values, which we have developed from the work of Vincent de Paul, form the foundation of our hospitality praxis and include the following:

- Celebrate the potential of people.
- Put our words into action.
- Aim to take a wider role in civil society.
- Believe in rights and responsibilities.

Our vision, mission, and values clearly define us as a charity. We aim to be inclusive, never exclusive, to help those on the margins of society, and to help the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in a fully respectful way in order to develop and create a new vision for themselves and their future. Our vision is that every person should have a place to call home and a stake in their community. Depaul Ireland operates low threshold services, with the aim that this approach will help to maintain the admittance requirements of each of our homeless services at such a level so that as few people as possible are denied access to any one service. This approach also recognizes that those who are the most difficult to work with are often the most in need. We aim to be respectful and inclusive in our services, and offer care and support to people who have experienced times of isolation and often been turned away many times.

Depaul Ireland works to create difference rather than conforming to a particular model of addressing homelessness. We strive to be innovative and influence structural change in the homeless sector, putting the people we serve at the core of what we do.
Our Work: Hospitality in Practice

Our work is also defined by our Vincentian values, and our staff teams and volunteers fully understand our organizational ethos. Hospitality is at the forefront of our services. By creating a community in which residents and staff work together to support one another, Depaul Ireland is continually fostering an environment in which hospitality is practiced every day. The following are some of the key components to our hospitality praxis:

- **Community**: Developing a collaborative and inclusive community plays a key part in our ability to manage the challenges in accommodating individuals with diverse and multiple needs and in helping them progress to independence. We continually strive to cultivate the appropriate culture, environment, mutual understanding, and trust in order to facilitate a community where residents feel at home and where both residents and staff can work together. Maintaining a community that is focused on respect and hospitable service creates an environment in which residents become neighbors with one another. Our staff fills the gap by offering support when and as required — and sometimes when it is not wanted at all — in order to encourage residents to stabilize their life, stay well and safe, and move out of homelessness.

- **Leadership**: In order for Depaul Ireland to effectively serve the community, our management teams demonstrate leadership and clear strategic direction in the implementation and provision of our homeless services. In this way, our approach to hospitality and service is embedded and understood by everyone across the organization, including our paid staff and unpaid volunteers. Our emphasis on leadership ensures that we all work together in a respectful, consistent, and flexible manner so that the people we serve feel welcomed and supported by our services.
Collaboration: A collaborative approach to service and hospitality is crucial. Collaboration among those we serve, our staff and volunteers, the local community, as well as our statutory partners and stakeholders, is necessary at all times and contributes hugely to our organizational approach. For Depaul Ireland, hospitality is a collaborative project that involves all participants, including those who provide services and those who receive them.

Individual Reflections on Hospitality

At Depaul Ireland, we have been working hard to make sure our values—working with the most vulnerable people in society—aren’t diluted by expansion [of our outreach]. Collaborative working is vital as well as continual learning and improvement of our approach as an organization to make sure we are at all times true to our values and supporting those most in need in our community.

—Kerry Anthony MBE, CEO of Depaul Ireland

Depaul Ireland derives its strength from our original partnerships with the Vincentian Family. That partnership has enabled us to stay true to our Vincentian values and ensures we remain action focused and prepared to take risks where others would not. Those touched by our hospitality offer the following reflections:

Nobody can do it on their own, from statutory funders to the Vincentian Family to friends and supporters.... Depaul Ireland has always been fortunate to have a strong community of support.

—Frank Allen, Chair of the Depaul Ireland Board of Trustees
Sundial House is very good. The staff are great. It’s like a hotel. I have my own room and privacy which is very important. There is plenty of space and it’s more easy going. I have a good chance to do art and keep busy. It’s better than being on the streets and I now have a starting chance.

—Resident of Sundial House, Dublin, Ireland

It has been nothing but positive since I came here to Foyle Haven, it has given me confidence and I am now taking pride in my home. Coming into Foyle Haven has been for the better.

—Day service participant, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland

Foyle Haven has made me more outgoing and helped me to mix with other people. I used to live in the day and now I look forward to the future. The project staff at Foyle Haven has a down-to-earth friendly approach and there is no pre-judgment.

—Day service participant, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland

I love living here, I have support for me and my daughter and finally feel some stability. I feel I am getting the help I need to prepare to move on and live independently through work I have done with my keyworker especially around budgeting.

—Resident of Cloverhill family service, Belfast, Northern Ireland

I came from a very bad place in my life, I’ve been through homelessness and addiction. I thought there was no hope after leaving prison. I had a bumpy road but I suppose you have to go through the ups and downs in Tus Nua to get where you want to get.

—Resident, Tus Nua, Dublin, Ireland
Vincent de Paul caring for the poor.

Oil on canvas. Castleknock College, Dublin, Ireland.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/
Residents enjoy a Halloween party at Sundial House in 2011.

Courtesy: https://depaulirelandvolunteerblog.wordpress.com/tag/depaul-ireland/