

GROWING



GROW IN IRELAND NEWS & GUIDE

ISSUE 15 Jubilee 2007 €2

INSIDE

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REVIEWS

EVENTS

POETRY

SPECIAL FEATURES

A CELEBRATION
OF 50 YEARS OF
GROW

A Magazine About

PERSONAL GROWTH, RECOVERY, MENTAL HEALTH AND THE COMMUNITY
SUPPORT AND INTERACTION THAT HELPS TO ACHIEVE IT.



Editorial

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PRINTING:

Modern Printers Kilkenny

DESIGN:

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This edition of GROWing is dedicated to the celebration of GROW International's Golden Jubilee. What an achievement. Fifty years of systematic, painstaking development and growth. And it all started when a small group of very broken people met up at Alcoholics Anonymous after having experienced mental breakdown, hospitalisation and discharge.

It began in a suburb of Sydney in April 1957 and during its life time has spread to many countries, and firmly taken root in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the USA.

GROW has been, throughout its history, a visionary organisation. Its contribution to world mental health is unique and inestimably valuable. It has provided those in need with a practical psychology of mental health, with a group method and with a wonderful community of people who lift your spirits and give you courage to walk the road less travelled, the road that leads to mental

health. We seem to live in a world that is increasingly obsessed with mental illness and one that remains relatively ignorant about mental health. And yet the World Health Organisation predicts that depression (or mental illness) will be the biggest health burden by the year 2020.

In this edition we try to pay tribute to the early builders of GROW. They are many and it is impossible to name them all, therefore we have used the stories of one or two people who have contributed to GROW in Ireland as well as International to represent the many.

GROW's journey has been a remarkable one. It was very quickly embraced by the Australian Government and peaked at over 400 groups in Australia. It moved to New Zealand, New Guinea Tasmania and from there came winging its way to Ireland and then to America.

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NEWS

GROW National Conference

The Clanree Hotel, Letterkenny, 30th May 2007

The GROW Jubilee Conference will take place in the beautifully situated Clanree Hotel, Letterkenny, Co Donegal on the 30th May 2007.

The theme of the conference is 50 Years of GROWing the Story of Recovery, Personal Growth and Community Mental Health. We will examine the work of GROW in Prisons, with Youth and GROW's Vision for the Future.

The welcome address will be given by Frank McMonagle the North West Regional Chairman, who will introduce Margo who is the Donegal person of the year, she will be followed by Stan Mellet who will tell the story of GROW in Ireland.

Marion Harkin MEP will chair session two. The key note speaker for the Jubilee Conference is Professor Patrick William Corrigan, Psy.D. For the past 14 years, Patrick Corrigan has been on the faculty at the University of Chicago where he directed the Centre for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. After a brief stint at Northwestern University, Dr. Corrigan moved to the Institute of Psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology where he is Professor of Psychology. He is also director of the Joint Research Programs in Psychiatric Rehabilitation. Five years ago, Professor Corrigan became principal investigator of the Chicago Consortium for Stigma Research (CCSR), the only NIMH-funded research centre

examining the stigma of mental illness. Professor Corrigan's research in stigma currently includes a study on self-stigma, a nationally representative survey on affirmative action, and a cross cultural examination of the stigma of employers in Hong Kong, Beijing,



and Chicago. Corrigan is a prolific researcher having published ten books and more than 200 papers.

Michele Kerrigan CEO of GROW will chair the afternoon session, speakers include, Nick Clarke who is a probation officer in Arbour Hill Prison, and Fergal Butler a social worker at the Central Mental Hospital. We also have Maureen McGroary-Meehan who is a Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist with the HSE. Maureen trained as a Registered Psychiatric Nurse in Letterkenny and trained in Behavioural Therapy in Dundee under Professor Phil Barker.

Maureen is accredited with the BABCP & UKCP. She is an Accredited Sexual and Relationship Therapist, holds a Master's of Science Post-Graduate Degree from the University of Ulster, is an Accredited Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist and holds a Higher Diploma in Clinical Supervision from the University of Middlesex in the UK. Maureen also holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Health Promotion from NUI Galway and has been a supporter of GROW since it's inception in Donegal Town.

Other speakers include, Stephen Deane from the Northwest Region, Patricia Kenny & Mary Greene Training Co-ordinators with GROW, Paul Clabby from Galway and Mike Watts National Program Co-ordinator with GROW .

The closing address will be given by Jim McSweeney, GROW's National Chairperson.

Booking forms for the conference have been sent out but if you have not yet received one please download it from the GROW website

<http://www.grow.ie/news-and-events.asp>

You can also obtain more information or book through Elaine Patton on 074 9161628 or grow@mailb.hse.ie.

The Early Days

How it started in a nutshell

By Con Keogh

What I have to tell you about GROW is the simple background story.

We started with a group that met in Hurstville on 26th April 1957, as an offshoot from Alcoholics Anonymous. I was one of that first group. How did I come to be involved?

I am a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney. I still am, though pretty well all my work is now involved in this non-denominational field. In 1954, when I was back from 11 years of study in Europe, and caught up in the academic world of philosophy and theology, as well as in some of the controversial social issues of that time, I broke down and had to be hospitalized for a severe mental sickness which put me out of action for almost a year. I was treated at a private hospital at Richmond at first, where I got a lot of shock treatment. I was deluded, hallucinating and violent. Since the nursing staff couldn't control me at Richmond, I was sent to the Reception House at Darlinghurst, where I was certified and committed to the State Mental Hospital at Parramatta. There I got a good deal of the coercive treatment – the solitary cell and the straightjacket – that was still common in those days, but I was also one of the first patients to benefit by the new “wonder drug”, chlorpromazine (Largactil), which came into use just at that time.

To be brief, coming out of hospital – shattered, unable to remember, and still very disturbed, stunned and mortally afraid – I was helped back to normal living by going to meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. I wasn't an alcoholic but there were no groups in the community (no group therapy even in hospitals) in those days for mental patients. My alcoholic friends got me well and shortly I was able to get back to light duties in a parish. But I continued going to AA for the next two years.

Now, at the AA groups I met and made friends with Renee, Ruth and several others like myself who were not

alcoholics but former mental patients recovering from mental breakdown. We got the idea of a special group of our own to work more systematically on our own special problems of rehabilitation. A few of our closest alcoholic friends offered to help. We called our group, not Neurotics Anonymous or Mental Sufferers Anonymous, but Recovery – to emphasise the goal and the solution rather than the problem. We decided we would use to our utmost our own personal resources, to help ourselves and one another – and that we would try to identify and record and keep the things we found successful.

Out of that first group have come the hundreds of groups we now have scattered around Australia and several other countries. And by staying faithful to that initial resolve to preserve what we learned, we have developed the Program of Personal Growth, the Group Method, and the Caring and Sharing Community, which make this organisation the largest and most rapidly expanding voluntary work in mental health in its home country, and one that promises to be in the vanguard of community work of this kind around the world.

GROW will always be indebted to Alcoholics Anonymous for the hospitality and help extended by its groups to those members who became the first nucleus of Recovery. But it also remembers with deep gratitude a number of special friends – alcoholics – whose generosity with their time and leadership probably made for this tentative new work all the difference between a good start and a poor start – or no start at all.

There was **Joe B.** who talked me (Con) into going to AA for help, and who died of lung cancer in Concord Repatriation Hospital before seeing the fruits of this valuable piece of twelfth-step work.

And **Father Tom D.** ... a real friend to humanity who

gave a home to the first Recovery Group.

"I'm just like an old beer mug that's been broken and put together again....I'm all right so long as you handle me gently"(Father Tom, at an early group meeting).

Father Tom was by no means a perfect performer or a great organizer but from weakness and suffering he had learned compassion. And, as a result, he had the remarkable distinction of being the inspirer of others – resulting in his being involved in the beginnings of three important movements for mutual help and human restoration:

He was the founder of Boys' Town (Engadine);
He was one of the first members of the first AA group in Australia; and finally he sponsored and gave a home to the first Recovery group, (the first meeting was actually in the back room of his Presbytery in Hurstville).

Father Tom, our beloved, fragile but fearless old friend, died in 1970 at the age of 76.

There were several others, of whom two, a man and a woman, as different as they come but equally convincing and encouraging, may be mentioned and, so to speak stand for them all.

Grace R., was petite, loving, spiritual and articulate, and it was a rare thing to be at a meeting where she spoke, without coming away reassured and strengthened. After taking up, like Ted, a central organizing role in AA in New South Wales, Grace disappeared from the scene for a long time and turned up again only four years ago to open a GROW group for us in Mackay, Queensland.

Bobby D., tough, big-hearted and challenging, was a former Australian lightweight champion boxer. (The D. stands, of course, for Delaney, and who among the over-fifties doesn't remember those unrelenting batterings that those two colourful Bobbies of those days – Delaney and Blay – gave each other when they were matched?)

At this time our Bobby was putting his life together again as a ship's painter on the docks.

Bobby was almost savagely truthful about himself. People used to say 'poor Bobby's punch-drunk he would growl, "but I wasn't punch-drunk, I was just drunk!"

And in order to identify with us former mental patients (thereby overcoming in reverse the identification difficulty some of our first ex-mental patients had felt at the AA meetings), Bobby would sum up his years of drinking in a great outburst of new insight: "And I was a schizophrenic," he would exclaim, roaring it out for emphasis. "I was a split personality, I was SPLIT FROM STEM TO STERN!" All this would be accompanied by a mighty gesture of his right arm, as if he were ripping himself in two with a knife from his head down to his toes. And the conclusion he would almost frighten us into accepting was this: "If truth and friendship can fix up a drongo like me, it can do the same for any of you."

This excerpt of Con's story is taken from a book produced in Australia to mark 25 years of GROW.

Founder of GROW 1957



Fieldworker's Testimony - Roseanna McCabe

ROSEANNA'S STORY

Carrick-on-Shannon - Thursday 18th January 2007

Life is like a journey, sometimes mapped and planned, other times it's spontaneous, interrupted, chaotic. When reflected upon, it shows routes taken, paths diverged and interrupted but at every junction, there are significant people who have impacted these routes. To be healthy, our humanity needs a connection and human contact, physically and mentally. *Blue Book quote Pg. 7 "Personal Value – no matter how bad my physical, mental, social or spiritual condition, I am always a human person loved by God and a connecting link between persons. I am still valuable: my life has a purpose: and I have my unique part in My Creator's own saving, healing and transforming work."*

How did I come to GROW? Did God put me in GROW's path or GROW's path in mine? Whatever this is and where I am, I am very privileged to be here and to belong to a very special group of people, GROW's Fieldworkers. I am very aware that I am giving the first Fieldworker Testimony of the New Year, 2007. I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year. This is a very special year for GROW internationally as an organisation. Happy 50th birthday GROW!

I was born in New York City, USA in 1952 to a young Irish couple. My father was from Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland and my mother from Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim. I was their second child - my brother had been born ten and a half months earlier. 18 months later, my sister arrived and 18 months after that, the arrival of my brother Sean completed our family. My mother had difficult births. Shortly after I was born, she was very ill and suffered a breakdown, ultimately diagnosed as schizophrenia. When I was three months old, my brother and I were sent to Ireland to my paternal grandmother and two maiden aunts who took care of us. This was to be the pattern of our lives as I was growing up. My parents' marriage suffered under the strain of it all and they separated. This led over the years to multiple custody cases in the family courts of Northern Ireland and New York. My mother and I never developed a close bond. Later on, her condition was exacerbated by alcoholism. I bonded strongly with my aunts, one in particular, who

became my mother figure throughout my life. My other aunt, a district nurse who was respected in the rural community, was very strict with a strong emphasis on duty and responsibility. I identified myself as Irish. I became a very responsible child, a parent figure for my siblings, as depending what country we were in, I was their one constant. We learned early on to be tightly knit and self-sufficient as a unit, to distrust the motives of adults and to see they had a lot of power but could be wrong, manipulative, childish and abusive. My older brother, at 13 years of age, stayed in the USA, after a custody case when he expressed a desire to stay with my mother. This separated the family even more. Then my father disappeared for 28 years.

All of this had a huge effect on our perception of ourselves, adults and the world in which we lived. It led to great insecurities, a loss of childhood, disruption of education and an interpretation of family, which have had lifelong implications. On the positive, I learned very early to take responsibility that things can be changed for the better. I learned that people have great power within themselves and that the human spirit is a wonderful thing, enduring, strong, courageous and can overcome a lot.

I learned and believe in the American Institutions of liberty, which include rights of human beings, freedom of thought, speech and religion or non-religion, basic human rights and that we are all created equal. I learned to accept that we all make mistakes and can choose to learn from them and I learned from those who went before me, sometimes what not to do and what was essential to avoid. I learned insight into myself and learned to know and value my sense of self which is necessary before I learn to value anyone or anything else.

I was married in New York when I was 19 and had my eldest son at 20. We returned to Ireland where I had three more sons and when my marriage broke down, moved with them back to Armagh at the height of the "troubles" in the North. I reared them as a single parent without any financial

support from my husband. My aunts, while not approving, were very supportive in many ways and gave me a deposit for a house, which enabled me to get my first mortgage. I was lucky that the job I had was flexible around the children's school life. I had plenty of overtime and made sure they had a happy childhood.

Things were not easy, the boys helped in whatever way they could. My oldest son was given a lot of responsibility, but I had a great belief in myself and optimism. I always felt if I was blessed with continuous good health that I could do anything. The boys are adults now. They have their own jobs and lives and are kind, good men. I have a lovely daughter-in-law and I am a proud grandmother of Annie, Joe and Jessica.

My working life has been as varied as my life. I started nursing in City Hospital in Belfast in 1969, but did not finish training. I was married in New York in 1972. Among other things, I had a coffee shop in Cavan, set-up a department in a paint company in Dublin, worked as a cook for a religious community. I have also been a Visiting Officer for Armagh Community Council and did Hospice care in Boston.

"My GROW Life" started two years ago upon my return from Boston when I applied for a part-time position of Fieldworker in the North East region after being told about it by a friend and Fieldworker, Eimear. I started on 4th July 2005 (oddly enough American Independence Day).

I never heard of GROW before and knew nothing at all about it. However, as there was time before training started, I familiarized myself through the red, yellow and blue books about how GROW came about, its origins and how it works. It is not something that can be done this way to understand it has to be experienced through participation and like most things, evolves and becomes clearer over time. I met with Mairead, the Fieldworker for the North Eastern region soon after. Prior to and during training, she let me sit in on meetings in Drogheda and Navan and use the Navan GROW groups as my own while training.

I remember the first piece of the *Blue Book* pg. 7, I was given "*Ordinariness: I can be ordinary. I can do whatever ordinary good people do and avoid whatever ordinary good people avoid. My special abilities will develop in harmony only if my foremost aim is to be a good ordinary human being*". That gave me such a feeling of freedom. Up until then, I had always felt so responsible for everyone and everything. I thought, and still do think, Mairead was very nice, even more so now that we know each other better. She was and remains a wonderful mentor and friend in the

truest sense of the word - encouraging, patient, truthful, challenging and a great listener. She was at those first meetings I attended, constantly affirming and telling me to "Go gently and be kind to myself".

Initially the meetings were very nerve-racking but everybody in the groups were always kind, patient, encouraging and supportive, "showing the way". From the beginning, I loved the program and the group method which I find fulfil a personal spiritual need. While appreciating the goodness and benefits of organised religions, my personal belief is God, goodness, spirituality and a belief in people.

Training took place in Kilkenny and lasted for 6 months. It was very helpful and there was great friendship and sharing among all the training fieldworkers. Patricia, our Trainer, was helpful, very encouraging, supportive and always available to give advice. My good buddy Tom, who I shall miss a lot, but to whom I wish all the very best that life has to offer, gave me the courage to go forward and among other valuable insights, taught me the benefits of the KISS Theory (Keep It Simple Student).

While the journeys were arduous and long, I was able to use the opportunity to overnight and visit my son in Dublin.

My area, the North East, I share with Mairead and for a while with Eimear. There is also a region along the Cavan/Monaghan border working for GROW through a Peace and Reconciliation Project. We each have our own autonomy and specific area and are aware of and respect each others boundaries. My area is Louth, presently consisting of two groups in Dundalk and one in Carlingford. Dundalk had a strong history of GROW in the past, but by the time I came on board, in July 2005, it had ceased though GROW retained and was paying weekly rental for unit space in the Community Offices, Partnership Court, Dundalk.

I made an appointment to meet and introduce myself to the Manager with a view to looking around and discuss re-opening the group. I was made aware at this meeting that there had been public knowledge of problems with a previous group. I was thankful as knowledge is empowering. It helped me to place the way forward and anticipate or pre-empt problems that could arise. Ruth Barror at the time, Acting Member of our Regional Team, requested a comprehensive written report. Our Regional Team discussed the way forward and Mairead was able to put me in touch with a member, who in the absence of a Dundalk Group, was attending a group in Drogheda. She in turn contacted previous members and we arranged to

hold an informal meeting with refreshments in a local pub. This went very well. Mairead came to support me and about ten people turned up. I changed the night of the meeting to facilitate training on Wednesdays in Kilkenny to a Tuesday night. Sara, our Administrator did the relevant advertising in the local papers – sending out the doctors' pack and placing community notices. While Mairead, her GROWers and I did a slot on the local radio to advertise the group.

The first meeting took place on Tuesday 26th January 2006 and about 8 people attended, along with support from Mairead and 2 of her GROWers. I am very thankful to them for the support they provided for the first few weeks and from the good wishes I received from the Regional Team, Sara our Administrator, the other Fieldworkers, my Trainers in Kilkenny and colleagues and friends in training. The two pieces of the Blue Book that were given to me over these weeks were pg. 9 *"The overall Key to Mental Health. Settle for disorder in lesser things for the sake of order in greater things and therefore be content to be discontent in many things"* and pg. 74 *"you alone can do it but you can't do it alone"*.

I found that while we paid for advertising for two weeks we could have the meetings advertised on an ongoing weekly basis in the community notice section of the local paper, free of charge. This in turn is read out on a regular basis on Dundalk radio. Periodically, I buy the local papers to make sure it's still there, as after six weeks, they stop, until I remind them again. I cannot stress how effective this has been in reaching out to new members. We have new members on a weekly basis and when all of the group is present, all together it is anywhere from 9 to 12 people and still increasing. As a piece of research I asked how each member heard of GROW and invariably they said it was the piece in the community news.

Leadership in the Group is evolving and we hope to start Leaders and O&R meetings soon. Twelve Step is very good. The group has demonstrated that it is capable of challenge and growthfulness, as well as great friendship and caring. We are looking forward to celebrating our first birthday next week. I found networking very helpful. I have met with Dr. Lyster, the consultant Psychiatrist for Ladywell Psychiatric unit in Dundalk and Ardee, as well as the psychiatric nursing staff. I regularly check and maintain literature is there and in the post offices and libraries.

I had a meeting in the Dundalk Simon Community last May with a view to setting up a group. This now meets on a Wednesday afternoon for two hours and has three

members. Because of a prior engagement, I was unable to attend this week and they surprised and delighted me by deciding to run it themselves. For me, this is a very special group. It can be unpredictable and requires flexibility and patience.

I started a third group in the Foy Centre, Carlingford in October, which takes place on a Wednesday night at 7:30pm. I have to admit it is struggling. But the members are going to help by contacting other people, so we will see where that will take us.

My plans for the year ahead are to underpin the groups I have and secure them. I would like to have a morning group in Dundalk. I have GROWers from the other group for whom it would be more convenient and as we have a free venue courtesy of Brainwave, the Irish Epilepsy Association, it would appear to be the next logical step. Dundalk could facilitate another night group as well, as it is rapidly expanding and the interest is there. Because of its past negative history, I am very careful to stress confidentiality at every meeting and what would happen if it is breached. I would envisage another group as close to the border as possible. Throughout all of this, Mairead has supported and given me ideas and the benefit of her experience. I am very grateful to her.

When I reached the big "Five O", I thought my life would settle down and become dull and boring. Obviously I had not encountered GROW at that point. I have enjoyed the on-going training days in Dublin and Kilkenny, the days in Carrick-on-Shannon, the Forum, Community and the National weekends and the workshops I have participated in and helped facilitate.

I made contact and keep in touch with the only GROW group in existence in the north and as a result, have made very good friends where I live. This is nice as I had only moved into the area and knew nobody. This is thanks to Mike as it was one of my tasks during training to make contact with the Organiser of the Downpatrick group. I have great regard and affection for the people I have met through GROW and tremendous respect and admiration for the courage and human spirit they show. I love the dancing, the fun, the friendship and the humour. There have been some bad times as well, but I could always talk to someone. The hours can be anti-social, lonely and sometimes I feel out of my depth, but then something happens that makes it all worthwhile again. To illustrate a point, I would like, at this time to share this little fable called "The Butterfly"

I feel as Fieldworkers we are very strong people!

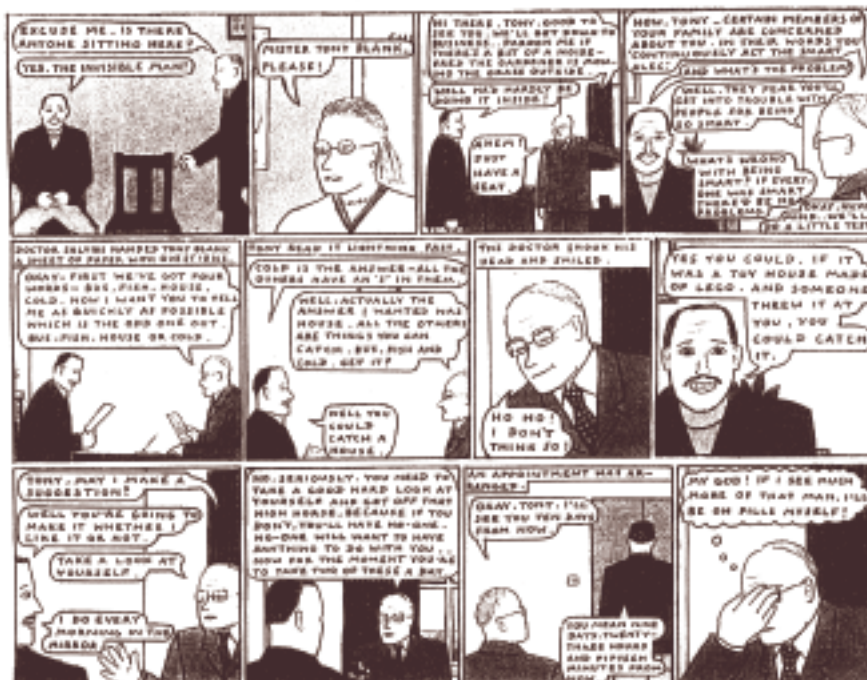
In conclusion, I would like once again to say what a privilege it is to be here today among you. I feel I have been on a challenging and steep learning curve and I am grateful that I have enjoyed your company for at least some of the journey of my life. To quote the American poet, Robert Frost in the opening verse of "The Road Not Taken", "Two roads diverge in a yellow wood and sorry I could not travel both", but for me, the closing part of this poem says it all "Two roads diverged within a wood and I took the one less travelled by and that has made all the difference."

The Butterfly

A man found a cocoon for a butterfly. One day, a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress, it appeared stuck. The man decided to help the butterfly. So, with a pair of scissors, he cut open the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But something was very strange. The butterfly had a swollen body and shrivelled wings. The man watched the butterfly expecting it to take on its correct proportions, but nothing happened. The butterfly stayed the same, it was never able to fly. In his kindness and haste, the man did not realise that the butterfly's struggle to get through the small opening of the cocoon is nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so it would be ready for flight. Like the sapling that grows strong from being buffeted by the wind, in life we all need to struggle sometimes to make us strong.



Doctor Leo Salvini Featuring Tony Blank



Congratulations

ENDA KENNY

Dear Mike

I congratulate GROW on reaching the 50th anniversary of its foundation. Here in Ireland I am happy to endorse the work of GROW and compliment all involved who do such a magnificent job in dealing with the challenge of Mental Health and recovery.

I can testify to meeting many people and constituents who have benefitted greatly from involvement with GROW.

Go néirí libh go léir san am atá le teacht.

Very best wishes

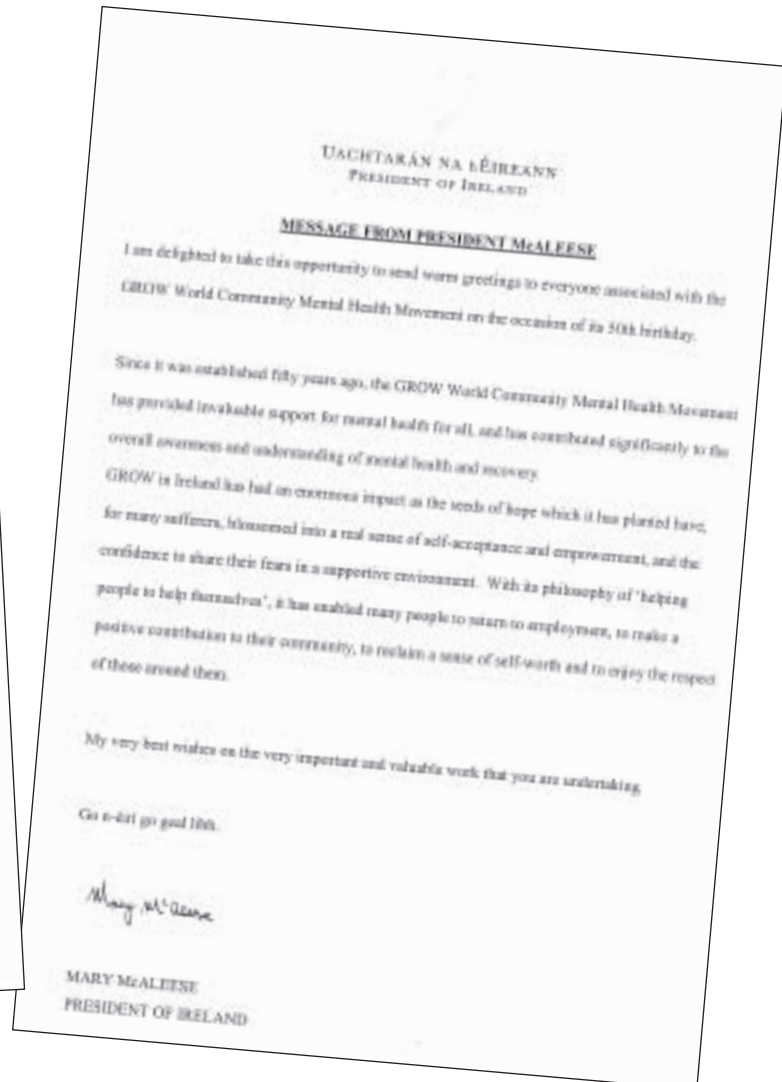
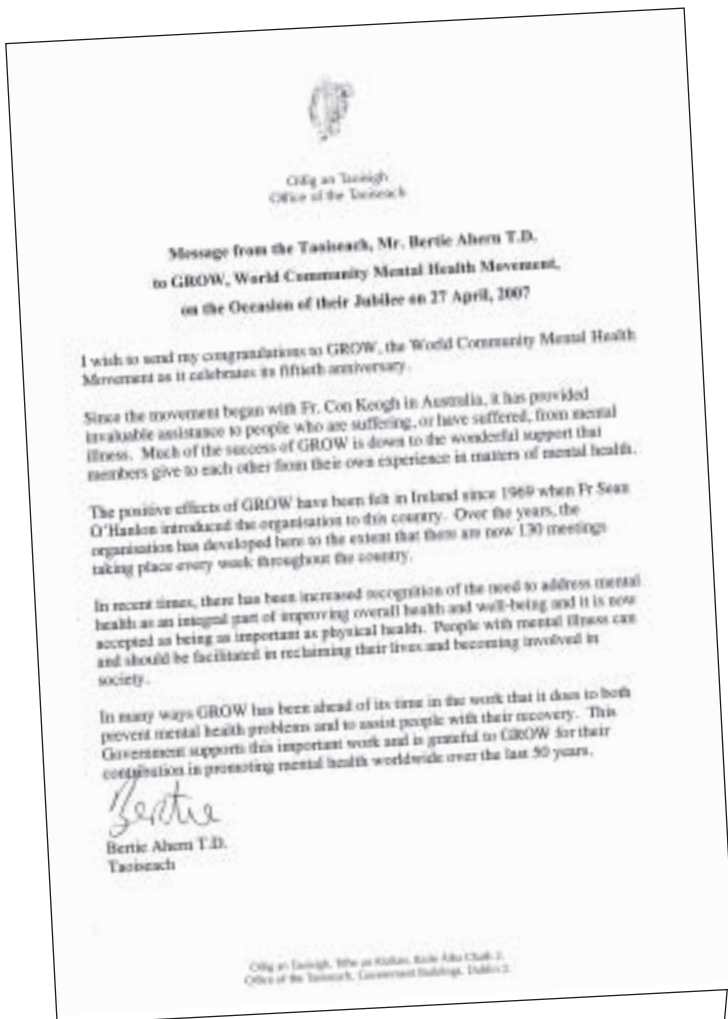
Yours sincerely

Enda Kenny



Congratulations on your 50th birthday.

A Vision For Change recognises the valuable role of informal care and support in the community. I wish to acknowledge the contribution which GROW continues to make to mental health in Ireland. While mental health and well-being are part of every day life, mental health problems have a high prevalence and affect society as a whole. The commitment and dedication of everybody involved with GROW is remarkable. Your generosity of time and energy is greatly appreciated particularly by people who have been or are affected by mental illness. I wish you continued success in the work that you do.
Mary Harney, T.D. Minister for Health and Children





Mental health care staff need rehabilitation training, new report finds

*Fiona Gartland, The Irish Times,
16th February 2007*

Staff in mental health community homes need training in recovery and rehabilitation to help residents have greater independence, a report on services has found.

The report said it was "of utmost importance" that rehabilitation and recovery mental health teams be put in place in the Health Service Executive to deliver services to residents in community-based homes as soon as possible.

The teams were recommended in "A Vision for Change", the Department of Health's mental health policy document, but have not been introduced so far.

The report, "Happy Living Here . . ." A Survey and Evaluation of Community Residential Mental Health Services in Ireland, was led by Dr Donna Tedstone Doherty, senior researcher with the Health Research Board and was launched yesterday by Bríd Clarke, chief executive of the Mental Health Commission.

It looked at 102 residences in three HSE areas and involved interviews with 138 residents.

The average age of the residents was 53 years. Most were single, half had attended secondary school and the majority had a diagnosis of schizophrenia with mild and stable symptoms.

The report said the climate and culture of the residences reflected more those of a "mini-institution" than of a home-like environment, especially in the high support residences.

"It is clear from the findings of the study . . . in the

restrictive nature of the residences and the lack of participation by residents in their care and treatment, that the principle of recovery has been poorly embraced or realised in the community residential facilities," it said.

For the principle of recovery to underpin mental health services, the retraining and education of many people will be required, it says.

"The perception of the residents regarding life in the residences was mostly positive. The report states that "the possibility exists that residents do not expect the basic rights that many people take for granted and, given that they have been in the mental health services for a long time, have come to believe they are incapable of independence".

It said unnecessary rules and regulations encouraged dependency and needed to be revised.

Residents reported in most cases that they got on very well with staff. However, there was evidence of an excess of care.

The study also highlighted the need for local authorities' housing departments to address the requirement of people with mental health problems. © 2007 The Irish Times

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CON



KEOGH

AS I KNEW HIM

(BY AN EARLY ILLINOIS GROWER)

Con Keogh was not imposing in stature but loomed large as a charismatic presence. We were attracted by his magnetism and lifted up by his intellectual brilliance. He talked about ideas that were at once hopeful and ordinary, but also brilliant and complex. He was teaching us concepts of mental health that we could turn into practical habits of living. Here for us was re-birth at its best--and he was the medium guiding our transformation.

Con could sell his ideas to the most dubious skeptic. And even if the “doubting Thomas” did not buy the concept, he would still listen attentively, captivated by the conviction of this unconventional priest. He won many a heart and mind through his relentless belief that everyone was going to want what he had to offer.

When it came to the practical details of living, Con Keogh’s head was often in the clouds. What might capture our attention a beautiful sunset or musical symphony—could fully escape him. If he arrived on time for a plane or a meeting, it was thanks to someone else’s intervention. But he never missed a detail when it came to our individual lives. As if by magic, he would go straight to our core, turning us from paupers into princes and princesses.

“First generous, then just” was one of Con’s guiding principles. And he was generous to a fault--with his money, his time, his talents. But ultimately, his greatest gift was that of acceptance---of our “poor human natures”—just as we learned to accept him with his own imperfections.

There is a time and a season for everyone and everything, including our friend, Con Keogh. His earthly season is slowly passing, but his legacy remains. He bequeaths to us an enduring future of

wisdom, hope and love—along with the “invincible confidence” that we can continue the work he inspired--in “realizing the ideal and idealizing the real.”

In loving gratitude to Cornelius B. Keogh, and in celebration of GROW’s fiftieth anniversary.

Carol Mussey, GROW in America, March, 2007

A MEMORY OF CON

BY MIKE WATTS, NATIONAL PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR, GROW IN IRELAND

What I remember about Con was his great love of life and his ability to turn it into a story. He embraced and celebrated the good times but he also turned his own personal nightmares into humour. He fully accepted the bad as well. He used to tell the story of how he was first admitted to the St John of God private nursing home. He was, in his own words “a very unruly patient”. On one particular occasion the Brother superior ordered that he be sedated and in the ensuing struggle someone went through a plate glass door. More significantly for Con, the needle intended for his leg went into the leg of the Brother superior who woke up 24 hours later. Con was immediately transferred to the state mental hospital.

A turning point for Con was a visit from his parish priest, a big friendly direct man. Con was in solitary confinement and ranting on about being in hell. The priest apparently knocked him to the ground took his head in his hands and shouted at him, something along the lines of “You’re not in hell you bugger, you’re in the state mental hospital. You are mad. And until you realise and accept that you deserve to stay here.” This interaction gave Con the first glimmer of insight and was a turning point towards recovery.



GROW NATIONAL YOUTH DAY,

Dublin 14th April: A resounding success

GROW recently held a 'National Youth Day' which took place in the Aisling Hotel in Dublin on the 14th April. This youth day event proved to be a substantial success, whereby many young GROW members from around the country travelled to Dublin to take part in the days proceedings. The central aim of the day was to explore how GROW might be able to develop youth oriented services that will help to further address the many mental health needs of this group of young people on a national basis. Therefore the main underlying focus of the day was to provide a forum and platform for the young people of GROW to discuss their own ideas on how we might be able to better address their mental health needs for the future.

The day began with an enjoyable and educational presentation from Faye Scanlon of the organisation 'Headstrong'. Faye covered a wide variety of areas pertaining to the various needs of young people in relation to mental health issues. Primarily Faye outlined that 'young people know what young people need and indeed what they want'. Her discussion also outlined the importance of providing a confidential, private and supportive service to all young people presenting with mental health difficulties. Ultimately Faye articulated that young people need to be involved in all stages of the design and delivery of services that specifically impact on their mental health needs.

The day progressed further whereby a small number of workshops were carried out which explored various topics related to GROW and the mental health needs of young people. Feedback from all of these workshops was very strong and many areas of interest were explored and discussed. The main areas of feedback from the various workshops included the following elements:

How GROW could become more attractive to young people of your own age group?

Areas emerging from this discussion included a need to develop promotional material geared towards the young people of our society. There were also areas that alluded to key elements such as carrying out a questionnaire on-line relating to youth mental health issues, placing GROW on youth related websites, using an appropriate celebrity to promote GROW. Ultimately it was stated that the environment of care that any organisation presents to young people must be an environment that promotes respect, honesty support and confidentiality at all times.

Would you feel confident in recommending people of your own age group to attend a GROW group?

Comments emerging from this workshop provided valuable feedback in relation to how GROW could address to a greater extent, the mental health needs of the young people in our communities. For example, on the positive side it was felt that the structure of the GROW meeting could prove very beneficial to young people as could the element of meeting new people and making new friends, breaking a sense of isolation that might have developed in the young persons life as a result of mental health difficulties. With respect to improvements it was stated that perhaps a national youth campaign may be required in order to attract more young people to GROW on a national basis. Once again the area of 'stigma' was highlighted as a possible deterrent for young people to attend a local GROW meeting. It was also felt that there might be a need to provide a service that is specifically tailored to meet the needs of the 18 to 30 year age bracket of young person e.g., a specific program reflecting youth needs.

Further workshops on the day explored the various forms of literature being used in GROW with the view that they could be developed to include various issues related to youth mental health. For example, it was outlined by the young people at the event that the following areas relating to youth mental health issues could be included in future GROW literature: areas such as peer pressure, self image/self esteem, family and relationship issues, suicide related literature, sexuality issues, bullying, alcohol and substance misuse, eating disorders, extreme mental disorders and exam stress related issues.

All workshops carried out on the day proved to be extremely worthwhile, informative and enjoyable. The days event was concluded by drawing up a list of names of young people and Fieldworkers who expressed an interest in forming a GROW National Youth Committee and also a list of names of persons who would be willing to represent GROW on a national 'media' basis. GROW would like to thank all persons who participated in the days event and we look forward to developing our youth related activities for the future.



GROW Sponsored Reek Climb

As you read this there will be less than 5 weeks to go before we attempt the 'reek'. We are very excited in Westport and in the GROW Western region about the prospect of welcoming you all for the June 9th challenge. The response from the public and GROWers has been very encouraging. Quite a lot of members are going to make the climb with us. As well as GROWers we have quite a large number of members of the public who have offered to climb and raise sponsorship for our organisation. Many people who are not climbing are taking sponsorship cards on behalf of someone who will be attempting the climb. We have got word of at least three people who will be climbing in their bare feet – good luck to ye lads and lassies!

The local organising team have been busy getting the arrangements in place for the visitors. Accommodation deals were worked out with B&Bs, the Westport Woods Hotel, self catering accommodation. The community centre at the bottom of the mountain is being organised as a base camp. The local Order of Malta and Mayo Mountain Rescue are in place and ready to support us.

This is an ambitious task you have taken on and we appreciate all the help we have gotten locally and around the country. There are some things that we need help on from within the organization:

Publicity

- ❑ Erect posters in churches, post offices, local citizen information centers, schools, or your workplace – these will generate support for those who are collecting sponsorship and may even motivate some people to climb with us. You can get them from your regional administrators.
- ❑ Ring up the local newspaper and ask them to include the press release into their paper – the regional administrator will have an electronic copy of this press release.
- ❑ Contact your parish to organize getting the notice inserted in the parish newsletter. The regional administrator will have an electronic copy of this press release.

Help in organizing

- ❑ Ask your fieldworkers how you can help promote the event locally
- ❑ Contact the organizing group in Westport by email or phone and we will take any offer of help for the weekend itself – remember you don't have to climb to be of assistance. We will need collectors, people to man the check in desk, sandwich makers, etc. – there will be lots of jobs that need doing on the day. To some extent we are depending on the GROWers who don't climb to make this fundraising effort a success. By the way we also need people who will make telephone calls in advance of the event -

Fundraising

- ❑ That reminds me – there are still some cards left to be filled. Contact your local GROW office or fieldworker and they will be happy to oblige.

The weekend

- ❑ For those who haven't a sponsorship pack the information on the program for the day and the accommodation arrangements are all posted on the GROW website. www.grow.ie

Finally for the rest of you – just by being there you will be supporting the climbers for GROW. It is not an easy climb but it is rewarding. For those who are climbing please take time to read the safety advice on the sponsorship card. We hope that the time of the year we choose will give us a good chance of a fine day. If we are blessed with a clear view from the top you will be well rewarded for your efforts. The view over Clew bay and back towards Connemara is one of the wonders of the world! However come prepared for any weather. Local conditions are very unique – what looks like a bad day 7 miles away in Westport may be completely at odds with clear conditions in Murrisk and on the mountain. Rest assured that we will take good care of you on the mountain and if safety is an issue we will not go ahead with the event.

TRIBUTE

Many thanks for your letter on behalf of the Board of GROW. I really like that I was a Dear.....letter.

GROW has clearly advanced quite a bit and every time I hear about it on the radio etc. it gives me great pleasure that the little organisation that I was involved in during the 70's has prospered well.

1. You can get a photo of me from www.carp.ie.
2. I remember well the whirlwind visit of Con and Albert back in the late 60's and early 70's. We were snowed under with the fantastic response to Con's appearance on TV. It soon became clear to us that being involved in GROW wasn't a peripheral part of our lives – it had to be the main part of our lives. We searched around to find someone to work full time for GROW and eventually a person was employed. I think this was a big step in that it marked a movement into professionalism. Part of the whirlwind is memories of Albert driving to Dublin and back to Cork – it was a Rover car and he smoked cigars. Another memory I have is of Con and an Australian female member of GROW discussing some Italian dish that they had ordered in a restaurant in Cork. Ireland at that time didn't know the difference between spaghetti and macaroni. Like many things, Australia GROW visitors were exotic species, full of the joys of life and never taking no for an answer.
3. I learned a lot of skills from GROW and still apply many of the principles in my daily life. My contact with people in GROW especially from working class areas shaped my choice in 1990 to opt to work in a working class area. I am now in a drug field working with heroin and cocaine users and when we started in 1994 there was much opposition/indifference from the Health Board, gardai, church, etc. Having seen GROW develop into an all Ireland organisation would have given me the belief that if something is worth doing then go ahead. People will eventually come on board.
4. I would like to see GROW change its sub title 'World Community Mental Health Movement in Ireland' to capture the idea that GROW can help a person learn the skills to negotiate through the difficulties of life, relationships, etc. This would be reflected in GROW's history when it changed its name from Recovery to GROW

Regards
Liam O'Brien

Thanks for the copy of GROW's 2005 Annual Report received recently. It is so good to see that GROW has spread its wings and taken its message and method to so many parts of Ireland.

At this time I offer a sincere word of appreciation to Con and all who have given us GROW with its Program, Group Method & Caring Community. When I retired from GROW in 1986, I took with me many special memories as well as the wisdom of the GROW Program – I try not to give too much importance to myself and my feelings. Often, I remind myself that come what may I am valuable. In a world of so much negativity, I try daily to minimize complaints, excuses and criticism. I now accept the Big God, The Supreme Healer who loves me better than I love myself. Yes! GROW has continued to challenge, support and guide me over the years, as I try to live one day at a time.

I have one special wish, at this time, that the GROW Program & Method will get to our young people offering them a healthy way of thinking and living.

With gratitude and best wishes for GROW's future development.

Sincerely,
Luke (O'Brien)



CONFERENCE 30TH MAY 2007

GROW
World Community Mental Health Movement in Ireland

50 YEARS A GROWING
A Story of Recovery, Personal Growth & Community Mental Health

The Clanes Hotel, Letterkenny, Donegal

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Professor Pat Corrigan, University of Illinois
GROW for Today: Beating Stigma and Forging Recovery

GROW's work in
Prisons,
With Youth,
and It's Vision for the Future.

For information or bookings contact
Elaine Patton on 074 9161628 or grow@mul.ie
www.grow.ie Supported by the HSE West

“From all my terrors, Lord, you set me free”. This line from the psalm expresses my deep gratitude to GROW. Many factors have contributed to the peace and freedom I have experienced in recent years. In pole position I place the GROW program together with the friendship and opportunity it continues to provide.

My need and suffering circled around crippling panic attacks over several years. With new areas and places of fear emerging in my life, my sphere of activity and ministry became more and more limited. Gradually I was coming to a dead end with little courage and less hope when a kind and gracious Providence introduced me to GROW.

My spirituality – such as it is – shuttles between the vertical – belief in God – and the horizontal – belief in persons. By a sort of contagion I caught the gift of health and wholesome living, not directly as a grace from God, but indirectly from coming to know and love the wonderful people of the GROW family. The stories and testimonies of very brave people living and working the program were inspiring and challenging. Against all the odds, battling with enormous obstacles, men and women locked within themselves for years, gradually blossom into the light of day as the beautiful and wonderful persons they are. To experience this growth and ripening in oneself and to behold it in others is a great joy. In a nutshell, that is what GROW is for me.

I met her off duty. A formidable woman successfully running an alcoholic unit, she sensed my fears and

chronic anxiety. Bluntly she said ‘you must go to GROW’. That was my introduction to one of the great gifts in my life. I had never heard of GROW at that time; in the meantime GROW has become a personal program for living, a family to which I belong and a ministry that is worthwhile and fulfilling.

Now that GROW’s Golden Jubilee is celebrated I record the debt we owe to the founding members. Born in the crucible of personal suffering, wisdom recorded in hours and hours of work, a group method honed in trial and error, Recovery became GROW and a special gift to humanity took off. That was 1957. GROW reached Ireland in 1969.

Con Keogh came to Ireland on many occasions. I met him first in Galway when with Albert Lacey, he visited GROW in that city. A truly charismatic man, Con’s story and achievement bears all the hallmarks of the founders of movements and enterprises that endure. The acid test is the countless numbers who have followed a similar path of story, recovery and achievement. All inspired by Con and those founding members! My deep-felt debt is recorded with a heart full of gratitude. And the best is yet to come. May GROW increase and multiply and fill the earth.

In this Jubilee Year, let us all rejoice and be glad!

Half a century of GROW

BY STAN MELLETT

I was involved in GROW from 1977 to 1985 and again between 1989 to 1992. I was just past my eighteenth birthday when I joined, very young and shy and extremely introverted. I had no social skills and little life outside of my job. Being an only child to elderly parents didn't help either. While I have never attended a psychiatrist, been hospitalised, nor taken a single piece of psychotropic medication in my life, I believe, in hindsight, that I was suffering from some level of teenage depression before joining GROW.

In those days children or teenagers were not considered to have been able to suffer from such conditions; in recent years we have come to discover that even young children can suffer such symptoms. Like so many teenagers of today I was in a state of misery, lacking personal value, confidence and hope.

I really hated myself. When I look back on it I realise how common an experience this could be, but at the time I thought I was the only one in the world who felt so bad about myself.

At the time GROW was just what I needed. I joined in August 1977 I took to the program and group method like a duck to water, and my first community weekend, in February 1978 in Dublin, was brilliant (in those days we had two national weekends each year). It was like waking up from a bad dream to a bright and sunny morning. One particular memory was of singing for the first time ever in public. The problem was that, unbeknown to me, among the Growers present were two from Liverpool, where the only group then in England was. I remember Michael O'Callaghan doing cartwheels to attempt to disguise the chorus ("the sea oh the sea, a grá geal mo chroí, long may it roll between England and me"). This was helped along with a moderate quantity of beer, for in those days the policy was that alcohol for some people could be an ordinary and a good thing, and having a moderate amount was permitted at community weekends. Of course, those with an alcohol or drug problem were equally cared for and supported in abstaining. (It was only some years later that, following upon a suggestion from Australia, alcohol was banned from such weekends. Now while I enjoyed many more alcohol-free weekends afterwards I still wonder if the original approach was not the more mature.)

The program was a revelation of wisdom and logic, while the group method provided me with the first extra-familial community I had ever been a member of. A complete revolution in my life followed. All of the key program bits we are all so familiar with became tools of

personal liberation. I learned to value myself and others for who we were and not who somebody else thought we should be. I learned that to be ordinary was a wonderful thing, and that doing the good and ordinary thing was liberating beyond measure. I learned that thoughts were not feelings: my God, what a revolutionary idea! What freedom to realise that I was not some helpless animal at the mercy of every whim and caprice of headless instinct, but a free human being with the power of choice in every area! I learned about stabilizing questions, about evaluating soundly and, very specially, about decentralizing. (That was long before Tom Parland got into the present mess.) I learned about striving to be good

rather than to look good, and I learned just where the dividing line ran. I learned that those who mind don't matter, although I rather preferred Brendan Behan's version, "F*** the Begrudgers". Most especially, I learned that the unexamined life is not worth living. I now know where such wisdom comes from, and will be eternally grateful for the work of those first Recovers,

and especially Con, with his degree in Theology, for making such principles of wholesome living available to the needy in accessible form.

Within six months of joining I was an organiser, and was soon actively involved in leadership meetings and active twelfth-step work. Among the many memories was of a carload of us travelling the 140 mile round trip to Tralee every Thursday night for three months to launch GROW in Kerry. Similar sets of trips to Clonmel, Waterford and Galway followed. A lifelong friend made during such missionary roadwork was Jean Hassett, whose sudden death still grieves me. Other leadership work targeted Limerick. Although GROW had been founded here from Cork in 1976 the distance involved and the scarcity of leaders in Cork at the time meant that Limerick had been left to its own devices, a situation we began to rectify in mid-1978. From this time comes the immortal question uttered during a meeting in Limerick we were supporting, "any urgent or depressing problems?". At the time some of the people in Limerick were not too happy with how the Cork folks wanted them to do things, one of the few exceptions being a shy Englishman, Mike Watts, who, although new to GROW, had the wisdom to see the whole picture. Needless to say, he went on to make a difference, and continues to do so. If all of this sounds like a bit of Cork 'onemanupship', it should be remembered that GROW, while starting concurrently in Cork and Dublin in 1969, made more progress in Cork in the early years, largely due to the efforts of Liam O'Brien, a Sacred Heart missionary priest, who was an inspiring leader, and who

Some memories from GROW's first Fieldworker Paul Cotter

attracted others of similar calibre, such as Mike and Barbara O’Callaghan. Thus, there were more groups earlier in Cork than anywhere else, and accordingly more leaders to export the movement to other parts. As national secretary during the 80’s I read all of the historical material, official correspondence and minutes from the early days.)

In those days visits from Down Under were scarce. I just about remember a visit by Joannie Baynes to our group in 1977, when I was about eight weeks a GROWER. She and Con were in Ireland for three weeks. Other visits from Robyn Lonsdale, Helen Shaw, Albert Lacy and, of course, Con Keogh, followed, but these were never really frequent or of long duration until the second half of the 1980s, when finances both here and in Australia enabled more regular contacts to be maintained. In the early years such visits were few and far between, due both to distance and finances. This was in contrast to other areas being developed which lay nearer Australia, such as New Zealand, where, despite better support from Oz, progress was slower than in Ireland. Nevertheless these visits were eagerly awaited and much appreciated, and timed, where possible, to meet our needs. One such I remember with particular affection was that of Robyn and Helen to help train me as fieldworker in 1981. We travelled widely and spent a wonderful few weeks together around Ireland.

An important feature of the early years here was the involvement of Catholic priests, particularly the founder, Sean O’Hanlon from Athea, Liam O’Brien, and the very gentle Brian Dunleavy and Tom Byrne, both active in Dublin. A number of others followed, some of whose names escape me. A somewhat later, but equally welcome worker, was Stan Mellett. Given the negative press the Church often has in these times, it is good to recall the selfless love as well. There were many other good friends in those years, too many to mention, some now dead. Faith, “the choice of the nobler hypothesis”, bears one up.

My own life in GROW got even more exciting when I became Ireland’s first fieldworker, in March of 1981. At the time there were around 30 groups in Ireland, and I was responsible for visiting them all. I was in Belfast the night Bobby Sands died and riots broke out. I remember staying with Frank Copeland in Crossgar and being advised to park my car – with its southern registration – around the back of the house in order not to attract negative attention. After six months or so as Fieldworker a crisis loomed. Fieldwork in those days required stamina, for much of the work was in the evenings. Being thorough, I visited four evening groups per week and was away from Cork every second week, spending a week in each of the other regions consecutively. For a twenty-three year old this was hard going, and made worse by the fact that I was ‘going steady’. Something had to give, it

was either GROW or romance, and I chose the lady.

I remained active in GROW for several years afterwards, in leadership work and as newsletter editor, being honoured as Vice-chairman of GROW Ireland in 1984/5. As always, the more I put in, the more I got out, and these were largely happy years. My life had become further complicated by now in that my new career was as a technical instructor (occupational therapy) in the psychiatric services. I had become something of a poacher turned gamekeeper and this was difficult. This was over twenty years ago and the services were not in any way as developed as they are today. (And that aint’ saying much, I hear you say.) There was still a great gap between GROW and the services, at least in Cork, and GROW was still regarded with suspicion by medication-mad consultants bent on protecting their patch. Again, working in an acute admission unit with a regular rate of about 25% of patients of ‘temporary’ (involuntary) status, brought a very clear conflict of interest, given the nature both of the work and of GROW. I also discovered that, sometimes, the psychiatric system was correct and did the right thing. Medication, involuntary intervention, and even electro-convulsive therapy (a much misunderstood form of treatment) could have a role in protecting the life and wellbeing of some people, just as could GROW. I suspect such views may not sit easily with many GROWers, but being as truthful as possible is one of the enduring values I still carry from my GROW days. These are my experiences. Hospital could be a very good place for people to be when they had to be there, and the great majority of psychiatric hospital staff are models of compassion and caring. Personally, I believe human life is sacred and everything possible needs to be done to preserve it, even when the person in question only wants to end it. I responded to this uncomfortable situation by moving on from GROW into other areas of life. This was in line with what I had been taught from the very first, that something like GROW could represent an important stage in personal development, but that there might come a time to move on to further growth elsewhere. GROW does not need to be a crutch for life.

My brief re-involvement in the early Nineties was uncomfortable. This came about through the difficult business of making GROW Ireland a legal entity. Most of the work had been done in 1983 to ‘85 but the legal process took so long that the constitution only became a legal reality in 1989. Basically this involved a number of named people taking responsibility as the first members of the legal entity, GROW Ireland, who would then call the first AGM and establish new structures under the legal rules. Some of us had dropped out in the interim period and had to become re-involved in order to execute the requirements of the constitution, as we had originally committed to do. With hindsight I now realise that we were trying to implement policies that were more relevant

to 1985 than to 1990, for GROW Ireland had moved on in the interim, in particular in the area of having much closer relations with GROW International, who were now finally in a financial position to take a much more 'hands-on' role in Irish affairs. The returnees, including myself, were still more attuned to the earlier reality, where GROW Ireland was largely left to its own internal devices. While there was significant support in some quarters for the new executive there were also sections of GROW Ireland who had concerns regarding how things were being done. GROW International then became involved, further complicating the situation. Unfortunately, while everybody involved was clearly acting out of the best possible motives, this was not universally appreciated. The whole business was difficult and was fraught with mistakes and misunderstandings. With hindsight I realise that everybody involved would have greatly benefited from practising the Four Guidelines for Co-operation, which would have smoothed out many of the problems and maximised the learning. The lesson I eventually took from this was the importance and challenge for all involved of remaining in touch with, and true to, GROW's mission statement: its program. To make a long story short, there was no real damage done and, in hindsight, I hope everybody learned something in the process. I certainly did, although this took some years to realise. On the positive side, the legal entity was firmly and correctly established, bearing fruits to the present day, and I remain to this day a proud, if somewhat neglectful, life-member of GROW Ireland.

On a personal level the conflict between rejoining GROW and my professional situation had not resolved itself, and so I took the setback of the constitutional business as an indication that I should move into new areas of personal development. At this time I began to put serious time into developing my long held interest in medieval history. Historians are scientists, and must maintain rigorous objectivity when interpreting the evidence. In the same way in life one must also maintain rigorous objectivity and self-awareness in the face of everything it throws at you. I may be the first historian to acknowledge the role of the GROW program in my academic formation. Science involves the ability to think logically and objectively, something GROW had taught me in spades. Unfortunately my studies in this area have been a bit stop and start, and I have not made as much of the opportunities as I should have. Nonetheless, I now enjoy the status of being an independent scholar of some standing, especially in the area of Irish medieval territorial divisions, and have a decent quantity of academic publications and books to my credit. Unknown to me, the first steps in this area were those where the GROW program taught me to think.

So you would think that after all of that GROW might have receded into my past. Not so, not so. If GROW has been effective in ones life it becomes 'once a GROWER,

always a GROWER'. In recent times in work a new opportunity presented itself. As part of a new way of looking at mental health issues my employer, South Lee Mental Health Services, looked around for someone to acquire the qualification of Life and Business Coaching and I was chosen. I am now over half way through the diploma course, and look forward to qualifying and bringing the wise skills and wonderful process of Lifecoaching into our services. While in class I might as well be back at a leaders meeting with GROW, for, although the jargon may be different, the underlying principles are the same. Win-win situations, self-awareness, balance and fulfilment, achievement of goals, the definition of coaching as 'putting the client in the driving seat of his life a.s.a.p'; parallels for all of this can be found in the GROW program. Much of the philosophy of lifecoaching can be summed up in GROW's Three Practical Points for Control, especially

Sow an act and reap a habit

Sow a habit and reap a character

Sow a character and reap a destiny

Truly, to quote the book of Ecclesiastes, "there is nothing new under the sun".

Finally, I am asked to comment on my wish for GROW in the next fifty years. As somebody who will soon be fifty and who has seen, read and studied much in his life, I am compelled to say that I have never found anything else quite like the GROW program and group method. These are wonderful tools with huge potential for personal growth and development, let alone for the promotion of mental health. However, when looking at the spread of GROW worldwide over the last fifty years, the thought strikes me that more could have been achieved. Presently GROW is still largely confined to those countries it was found in twenty five years ago. Don't misunderstand me here, I fully recognise the hard work and commitment necessary to get where we are. I was fully involved myself in promoting GROW in Ireland for ten years, much of it before any salaried employee appeared. I also believe, in all sincerity and humility that, if GROW became less protective and controlling of these wonderful tools and more prepared to share them or experiment with their application in a less controlling context, even more people could be reached and thus more healing and growth achieved. While these tools are GROW's to manage as it sees fit, the materials they are comprised of are the very essence of our Judaeo-Christian heritage, the wisdom and fruit of traditional Western Civilisation. I believe that GROW has a moral imperative to do this at this time of such human misery and spiritual starvation. GROW should stop trying to protect what it has from being hijacked – however well-intentioned such efforts are – and give it to the world. My wish for GROW in the next fifty years is for GROW to become established in every English-speaking country worldwide in great numbers. Its time for GROW to Let go and let God.

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE



It is with great pleasure that we introduce our new and first Chief Executive Michele Kerrigan. Michele was successful in an open contest and her appointment has been greeted with widespread acclaim. Our new Chief Executive joined GROW in Ireland in 2004

where she took on the role of Financial Controller and HR Manager. She excelled in these roles attracting increased funding for the organisation and also putting many new policies in place in the personnel area.

Prior to joining GROW, Michele spent eight years with MS Ireland where she reached the position of deputy Chief Executive. There she played a major role in the development and expansion of MSI. During her period

the staff numbers quadrupled with the funding increasing in line to maintain this growth. She also had special responsibility for the management of MS Respite Care Centre.

Previously she held positions of responsibility with Power Securities and with Brother International. Michele holds a diploma in Health and Social Care in addition to her financial qualifications.

Her main initial ambition will be to raise the profile of GROW and to further upgrade the salary scales in GROW in order to bring them more in line with HSE pay scales. Increasing the number of GROW groups will also be a priority. We wish her well in her endeavours

The Importance of Practical Tasks in Prison

Since starting to attend GROW 12 months ago every week, I have been setting tasks for myself. Sometimes the group has set me a task if I can't think of one or if I need to be challenged more.

I try to complete my task every week or at least attempt it. I find it gives me structure to my week. This can be difficult while you are in prison. It also motivates you, which is also difficult in prison.

I get a great sense of self worth when I complete my task and if I don't complete my task the group will be understanding and helpful to complete my task.

It's great to get positive feedback from the group or even some constructive criticism if needed. Some times we can take on tasks that are not that challenging or even relevant. This is where the group steps in and can advise on more relevant tasks.

Along with setting tasks every week you can also have an on-going task. Mine is giving up cigarettes and going to the gym. I have received huge support from the group which has helped me greatly. It is also important to have some piece of the Blue book when doing tasks. The group can sometimes help with this as well.

Reports on Progress are a very important part of the meeting as you have 12 people there to support you.

Help focus my mind

It's very important for me to have weekly tasks and daily tasks in prison because it helps me focus my mind on the things I need to focus my mind on like my alcoholism and drugs. It really helps me think positively and stops me having negative thoughts. If I didn't have weekly and daily tasks my mind would drift back into mindless thinking. I am very mindful of the dangers of me slipping back into this state of mindlessness with no concern for the consequences of my actions. It really helps me to have weekly tasks and sharing them with the group helps me greatly. Also by the group sharing their tasks helps me a great deal.

I need to have weekly and daily tasks in prison because I know from past experiences if I didn't have tasks my mind would be focusing on negative thoughts and self pity which would eventually lead me back to drinking or drugs. That is why it is great to have these tasks when you are behind your door at night; it helps you to focus your mind on positive things.

My daily tasks are reading from my 12 step AA book, GROW's Blue Book. I start off the morning by saying the serenity prayer and asking God to guide me through the day. I also read the daily reflections. They are tasks I must do every day for the rest of my life, they are part of me.

My days are taken up with something positive to do because I can't afford to sit and think negative thoughts. I have been there and I don't want negativity in my life. I need to focus on the future and not dwell on the past and by focusing on the things I am focusing on now I know my life will get better. I am slowly healing myself into a good person.

Tasks are something I never did before in prison, all I ever thought about was drink and drugs – total negativity.

Tasks are very important not just to me but for everybody in prison, because in prison all you have is time to think. Most people with alcohol or drugs problems think negatively. Planning where they are going to get their next drink or drugs from because that's all they want in their lives.

The Importance of practical tasks in prison

Setting a task in prison is a good start to getting your life back under control and although there may be ongoing problems in your life to the setting of long term goals to the point that you don't know where to start, setting yourself a small task is the start of taking control. Looking at where you are going and setting goals. Setting yourself a task is one way you can demonstrate to yourself and others that you are capable of making changes in your life.

The ability to be able to make time to undertake a task allows you to look at yourself and reflect on who you are and how emotions can affect the way that you behave and act.

Many people feel that they are unable to change because there is no help available Or that the help available is not really for them. A task each week enables people to look realistically at what help is available and gives them the commitment to go out and find help. A task in the prison could be to look again at what resources are available, and to get people to go and ask for help. This is also a way of getting people to talk with one another to see what help they can get and see what skills and talents others have or have in common. This is one clear way of developing friendship and trust. When you encounter the inevitable difficulties and you don't feel like doing your task you can "compel your muscles" with the support of others. You can do this in a constructive way rather than giving yourself over to your emotions. You can start to take action, take control and prepare for new situations – joining a class – asking for help - preparing for getting out.

As you start to do things constructively you are also sharing leadership skills – demonstrating that you can do things – constructive – but also you are letting people know the problems you faced, the difficulties you endured and how you overcame them. The group then knows who the person you are now and what your life is like now, and also so do you.

Finally as well as looking after yourself and your own body you are able to promote GROW and help others in need, who is going through a situation you have been through. By example you are able to demonstrate the reality of change, friendship and happiness and the skills you have learned, singing, poems and cooking (Lasagne).

Letter from a Newcomer

My name is Simon. I joined GROW just five weeks ago and am finding the meetings immensely beneficial. I find great comfort in being able to 'report' on my progress at GROW meetings and, hopefully, other members will enjoy some benefit of any input I can put forward personally. Some of our members, including myself, text each other on a fairly regular basis. This is a really good idea as keeping in touch can be a great comfort in times of stress, depression or loneliness.

I personally, suffer from Anxiety which can manifest itself in panic attacks, especially when anticipating an event of which I am not as familiar as I would like to be. This can be very frustrating when the event is one which I would really like to be part of. I really appreciate the GROW meetings. In fact I would go as far as to say that GROW is the best 'club' I have ever belonged to. Long may it continue.

As a sufferer of Anxiety related illness I find great solace when I am out in the great outdoors. I really enjoy cycling and walking in the countryside or hill walking in the Mourne or Cooley mountains. I have always enjoyed taking photographs of the beautiful landscapes and seascapes of County Down and County Louth. The recent advent of digital photography has made this process even easier as you can display and store your beloved photographs on the PC, or even view them on the television. When purchasing your first digital camera I would strongly advise a compact camera with six mega pixels. This should be sufficient to produce good sharp photographs up to A4 in size, or larger, which you can print on your PC. You should also check that your camera has a good quality lens and is made by a well known reputable company.

I take my compact camera everywhere and often 'stop' the bicycle when I see something inspirational like a rainbow, or beautiful church illuminated by God's light. I generally leave the camera on 'automatic' and let technology do the complicated business.

T I M E *A poem by Simon*

This quiet, this place
I lie not of what I See
Patterns of living, of centuries passed
Echo with the breeze
Voices, shadows, sounds pass by with every
breath
Nothing is captured
If only by light
A camera can seize
Time itself can be grasped
If only for a second or less
But we move on, never cease, never final
My future is there
But for now in the present
Here I can change
Time is but fleeting
It waits not
What lies beyond

We know not
I put pen to paper
The ink just flows, the thoughts follow
Life is here, life is now
Beauty is here, everywhere, all around us
To be nurtured, photographed, enjoyed
Light is to be captured
By sight, by camera
Memories, brief snapshots of the mind set
free
Put pen to paper
Camera to the eye
Negative turns to positive
The light prevails
We move on
We capture, we enjoy
But for now I rest



DERMOT'S TESTIMONY

My story starts when I was seven. I had a bad temper. I broke a window and got a nasty scar on my arm. When I was fourteen I went to Washington D.C. where there was a graveyard of the Vietnamese Soldiers. There was thousands of graves. I stayed there for two weeks than came home.

Then I joined the army, the Irish Air Force. And I became very disciplined. I stayed there for three years and then I left and went to England. I went to Sheffield. My sister was living in Sheffield. I then went to Birmingham where I have two sisters. I stayed with them for a long time. But I got homesick when I went to London and got involved with drugs and I had to go to hospital. After six months I left and came home to Ireland but was sleeping in a hostel. I spent the next few years going over and back to England. I worked when I could get work but found it hard so I was on the labour. I was getting enough money to keep me and for going to England.

Then I came to the Central Mental Hospital in 1993. So I've been here fourteen years. It's been great for me here and I feel very well. I get parole every week. We go out for three hours to do some shopping. Then there is a bus trip every Sunday. We go to Dunlaoghaire in the morning and then Bray in the afternoon. I attend all the GROW meetings, current affairs and any other Therapy that's going. Well that's my testimony. Thanks for listening. Hope you understand me now.

P.S. I also get visits, once a week my sister comes to see me. Well that's all, thanks

A LEADERSHIP PAPER

"Growth in mental health means gradually learning the difference between what I feel like and what I really want, and gradually making my chief wants coincide with my own and others' vital needs."
(No.11, 7 More Keys for Understanding Feelings, p.61)

I agree with the above statement. I believe that what we all ultimately want is to be happy, but this often involves going against our feelings and doing something we don't feel like doing – especially in the beginning. We've all heard the phrase "You've got to be cruel to be kind". What I feel this phrase means is that somebody is taking the easy way out, and a parent or more mature member of the community is coaxing or helping them confront a difficult situation which will ultimately contribute to their growth.

For example, a young girl may decide not to go to school after the age of 16, because she will have more pocket money by working, and no homework in the evening. Her parents are very annoyed and manage to persuade the school Principal to give her a second chance. They then give her a stern talking to and manage to persuade her to give it one more go. When she eventually gets her Leaving cert, she will have a greater variety of careers open to her, and better pay. She is eventually very

grateful her parents helped her decide to give it one more go!

Often when people are very maladjusted, they have developed a very narrow comfort zone. Anything in any way taxing requires them to step out of their comfort zone and with a big effort, do the thing which is important to their growth, but which is difficult. For example, they may have been opting out of socialising, for such a long time that something which was once a little challenging now seems very difficult to do. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps they were initially quite shy to begin with. Maybe they were then treated badly or let down by someone they trusted. They vowed never to trust again, felt sorry for themselves, and avoided getting into situations where this could happen again. So eventually they lose out on love, on friendship, on gaining courage and confidence, etc. You have to risk loving and not being loved in return. "Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all!"

Cont. Page 23

Somebody suffering from depression, may often be in a state of inertia where they don't feel like doing things, e.g. getting out of bed in the morning, cooking a hot meal, etc. They may be consumed with feelings of misery about something bad that has happened or perhaps not, depression can occur without any particular defined "problem" having to cause it. It is only by continually going against these feelings of inertia and doing the difficult thing that it eventually becomes routine and, perhaps, even enjoyable. However, by indulging in their misery, they only feel worse. By constantly telling somebody about it again and again, they end up bringing the other person down also- "We gave too much importance to ourselves and to our feelings." The 12 Steps of Decline No.1, p.4. BB The busier the person becomes, and the more routine he/she has in his/her life, the less the thoughts of self-pity or sadness will bother him/her. Also, if you act happy, even when you are not, your feelings eventually come round. to your way of acting! "Feelings are like children in a classroom. It's up to me which ones get permission to express themselves in words or action." 5 First Keys for Understanding Feelings, No.3, p.14 BB.

Another example of learning the difference between what I feel like and what I really want, is driving a car. Driving a car can be difficult for beginners. The driving instructor can be strict and requires you to put in your best effort. It is necessary to be alert and to concentrate hard on the road situation and put into practice the Rules of the Road. I may feel like avoiding driving lessons for the time being, fooling myself that I will get around to it "next Saturday", "next term", "next year". That way, I can have a sleep in on Saturday morning.

But all this comes at a price. I will continue to be dependant on my parents for lifts. I can only go shopping when my parents go shopping. I can't tour the mountains when I want. I have to wait for the bus to work on cold, dark, wintry mornings.

Learning to drive may be unpleasant for a while, but the pay back for this short term difficulty is a world of freedom. Besides, after the first few lessons, I may come to enjoy driving and see it as a pleasure as opposed to a penance! I should bear in mind "If its worth doing, its worth doing badly, for a start and while you're improving" GROW Wisdom P.32 BB. I can practise on quiet roads at the start. I can bear in mind that my instructor has a clutch and a brake on her side of the car and can stop the car if I get into difficulty!

The final example I will give, of gradually learning the difference between 'what I feel like and what I really want, and

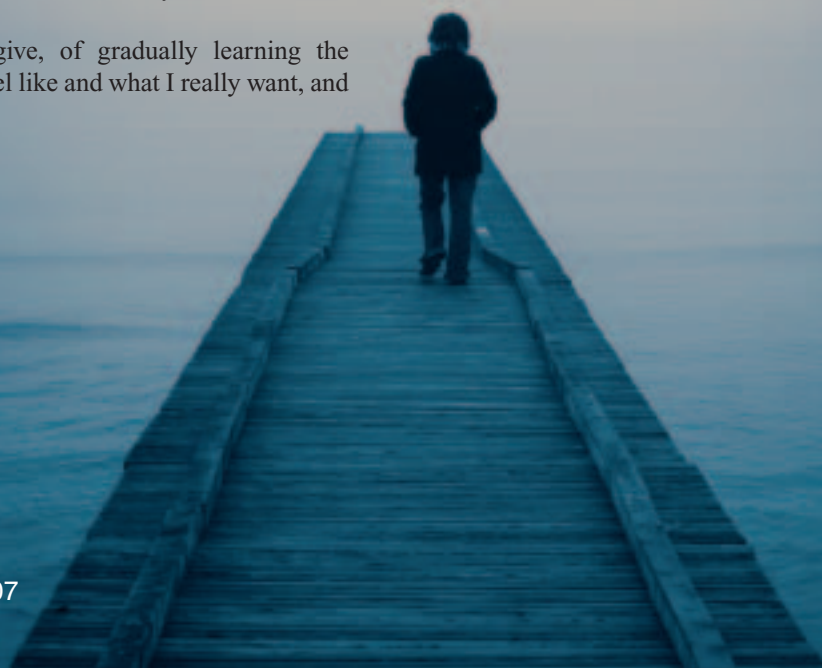
gradually making my chief wants coincide with my own and others' vital needs', is a concept called "Delaying Gratification". I may feel like doing the difficult work last, for the simple reason that it is difficult. But if I put it off today, chances are I'll probably put it off tomorrow also. This continues until eventually the deadline has nearly arrived, and I have no choice but to do it.

Chances are, by then, I will have less time to complete the project, and not only do I have to do something difficult, I now also have to do it under pressure. "The surest way to make a task appear impossible is to keep on putting it off." GROW Wisdom p.61, BB. However, if I keep doing the difficult thing, eventually it will no longer appear difficult, indeed, I may even find it interesting and a positive challenge! A particular GROW Wisdom comes to mind - "The thing you fear unreasonable, is your master", p.61 BB, and.... "Do the ordinary thing you fear, do the ordinary thing that repels you...." No. 1 of the 3 Practical Points for Control p.32 BB

A very important truth to remember here is that when I tackle the difficult task as early as I can, I can relax once its finished, and enjoy the rest of my day. I should not be afraid to ask for advice or help for fear of looking stupid. Nobody is an expert on everything. Two minds are always better than one!

In the case of the shy person, please remember: If you continue to socialise, people will appreciate that you're making an effort and will warm to you and have greater respect for you. The first few minutes may be difficult, but afterwards, your shyness should diminish, and will do so the more often you go out socialising. Don't resort to "Dutch courage" Remember No.5 of the Keys for Understanding Feelings, p.14, BB. "To take artificial means (pills, hard drugs, or alcohol) to meet the ordinary stresses and crises of life is to weaken my natural and personal resources for living."

It is also true that people don't always realise the extent to which you are shy, because they are often worrying about something annoying about themselves e.g. "is everybody noticing how fat I look in this dress?" or "will people think I'm being unfair to my late husband by dating again so soon?" So just enjoy yourselves and don't worry about making any "faux pas", remember the BB wisdom "Have the courage to make mistakes!"





Helen's Testimony

I was born in 1985, the eldest of two girls, being a year and a half older than my sister....those extra six months always became important to me in my negotiations with my parents about late bed times and gaining more independence.

I was always a very chatty and confident child growing up, never afraid to take risks or break the rules. I have memories of bringing my mam's engagement ring to school at 5 years of age to show off to all of my friends and leaving garden gates open so that my little sister would get in trouble for following me out onto the road. I always blame the close age gap between me and my sister as the reason behind my constant attempts to get noticed by my parents, never thinking twice about making up stories or screaming the house down.

I don't remember much from my early childhood other than it was pretty much uneventful. I enjoyed primary school but was happy to take on the challenge of secondary school when the time came around. Initially, I found the first three years of secondary school difficult to adjust to but in 5th year I became a lot happier and found the support of a group of great friends with whom I'm still close. I think the GROW principle of friendship is very apt here. "Among human relationships, friendship is the special key to mental health"

I always had a keen interest in sports and music growing up especially in basketball, playing guitar and singing. However, as the years progressed at secondary school I became a lot shyer and a lot less confident in my ability to engage in these activities publicly. Despite not knowing the reason for this, I was always conscious of this development and forced myself to join debating teams and school committees to help myself overcome this problem.

I always worked hard at school and started studying social work in Trinity College in 2003. My sister likes to tell me that all those years spent trying to boss her around have finally paid off and I've managed to make a career out of it. I've loved college and will be sad to say goodbye to the easy ride of student life come June next year.

I was introduced to GROW by Nick in my attempts to get a placement out of him in the Probation Service. I remember him handing me the "Blue Book" on the way

out of college one Friday evening all those weeks back. I had never heard of GROW before this despite having engaged in mental health modules as part of my degree so it really was all new to me.

I was very eager to see what a GROW group entailed when I learned it stood for "Get Rid Of Worry". My mother was also very keen for me to attend having called me a chronic worrier all my life. I did think you had to have some sort of mental health issue before you could join, like depression or anxiety and this made me a bit nervous about attending. However over the last few weeks at the group I have become aware that everyone is welcome; from those with little problems to those with overwhelming problems. The response from GROW always remains the same – mutual support for all its members to prevent decline in the present as well as in the future. The trust and confidentiality of the group has allowed me to feel more secure and confident in speaking openly as well as in recommending it to others as a supportive outlet.

I am forever in awe of any person who can speak confidently and without fuss within a group setting. My admiration has increased with the fact that much of this speaking out concerns the difficult and painful experiences many of the group members have been a part of. I was also extremely impressed at the ease at which each member spoke during my first few meetings – this courage will stay with me for a long time.

Personally, the group setting has helped with my own unease of speaking in public while GROW itself has made me make time for the important things in life through completing (most of the time anyway) weekly tasks.

The Companionship Test in the 'Blue Book' is something I am drawn to each week and each week my score is different. It's nice to look at it on a Sunday evening and see where the room for improvement lies in the week ahead.

I am still in the early stages of the GROW program and have yet a lot to understand and gain from it. Hopefully after college I will have the determination to set aside time to become involved in a GROW group in my own community and along the way subject another few unfortunate individuals to my interesting cooking dishes.

ENSURING GROUPS REMAIN GROWTHFUL



The GROW program, is a philosophy of living that is based on the tremendous value of the human person. It is a roadmap in how to change, guiding us gently out of our comfort zone, through mutual help in a caring and sharing community. It is from this program that we learn how to recognise and outgrow our maladjustments, guiding us in the direction of recovery and personal growth. After a while, you will learn that you too can do the ordinary thing and live like any ordinary person. It is from the program that we learn that feelings are not facts, and that we can compel our muscles and limbs to act rightly in spite of our feelings, and that feelings are like the weather, they are in fact a sort of internal weather, we just have to go through their changes as with the weather outside. All of the above are mere snippets of a comprehensive 12 step program, that makes up GROW.

The GROW group, is not just about learning, it is also about problem sharing and problem solving. From this comes an appropriate practical task, helping the person overcome their particular difficulties, one at a time. As a GROWER, you know you have the backup and support of (1) The Group, (2) The piece of the program (3) The practical task itself and (4) A person to contact through mutual support and 12 step work. The problem, when put through its paces from the

above network of support, is quickly brought to size, and there is greater clarity, when faced with difficulties during the week.

This may seem very simple, however the GROW program, like a complex machine needs regular attention and maintenance. You don't learn the twelve steps and program, and then you're finished, it is more complex than that. Life keeps throwing things at us and we continuously need to change and adapt to cope with these changes, and consequently we are constantly looking at GROW in a different light.

All too often however, people in groups get too comfortable. The comfort zone is very appealing. It is nice to wander into irrelevant talk, because it feels good. Concentrating on the main issue is harder than skirting around the issue. We all at times like to paint ourselves as helpless victims, unable to change due to a terrible psychological illness, when in fact, the real issue is that we are afraid of change. Alas however, where focus and direction is lacking, the clarity of knowing what to do in the week ahead diminishes. Hence the essence of the GROW program is lost.

On the other hand, the GROW program was made for the benefit of the people it serves, not the other way round. It is not a rigid piece of work, the group method

can in fact be adjusted according to the circumstances of the meeting. Perhaps someone is in deep distress and needs additional time, perhaps a person does not feel comfortable with leading and needs the gentle guidance of another member. However members who persistently sabotage a meeting for their own end need to be checked, as this can ruin a meeting for others. Examples of this would be a member dominating a meeting or spending too much time on their problem, not allowing time for others to share their problem due to the time constraint of the meeting. On the other hand if the Ensuring Groups remain Growthful the meeting is too regimental to sticking to the group method, the warmth and spontaneity of a meeting can be lost. It is therefore a question of balance, and when the balance sways too much in one direction, the group needs to re-evaluate it's direction, preferably through attending an O&R meeting, however it is often the task of a seasoned GROWer or fieldworker who has to point this out to the group in question.

If you want a football team to win, the team in question have to put in their training and the managers need to support the team in their efforts. GROW groups are no different. You simply cannot have a successful GROW meeting, if it's members are not making the commitment to be regular at their meeting. It is an established fact that regular attendance at your GROW meeting, dramatically reduces your need for re-admission to hospital, not to mention the programs ability to guide us in our lives. But you simply cannot sit watching at the fence, you need to be a 100% GROWer, committed to the group. Where there is commitment, members have support, program learning, and develop as true leaders, each playing a vital role. Problems can only be successfully dealt with in a group if the Group itself is stable. Continuous changing of members, alters the dynamics of the group, making it unstable.

We have however to be realistic and resign ourselves to the fact that for many, many reasons a Group will lose members. People's health can change, so too can family circumstances, or perhaps the person has left because they feel that their growth has stagnated and are disillusioned. In any event, we continuously need to

be carrying out 12 step work. This can be keeping in contact between meetings, local newspapers, sending information to health professionals like doctors or community health nurses, or by contacting various ministers of religion. Attracting new people is vital to our work, spreading the message of what we have to offer. Local knowledge is key in all of this. Sometimes a member brings along a friend, a councillor sometimes will refer a client to a meeting and so forth. You need to network into the community, and develop relationships within the wider community.

All of us need to be keeping the program alive, and to do this we need to start with ourselves. The one I am changing is me, and nobody else can rebuild my life for me, however I am not alone, but in companionship with my fellow GROWers. This ethos needs to be encouraged and spread to our members. There is comprehensive support in GROW, from it's group method, program and community of friends. The Leadership Course is a prime example of how we all have the potential and leadership in our lives. We learn to look at a person through magic glasses, in one lens we see a person with needs and troubles, however in the other we see a person with gifts and talents.

It is when we stop trying, that the program and group becomes stale. When we adopt the attitude that I can learn no more, that we become unable to change. The truth is we are all on a journey, and we each can learn from the others experience. For Groups to become Growthful, we all need to play our part and actively engage with the program and with each other. By sharing what we have learned and by understanding and developing GROW's unique Ensuring Groups remain Growthful understanding of leadership, we soon learn that we all have a part to play in the group. None of us are larger than the group, yet we all are an integral part of it, and if we want the group to become Growthful, we need to actively engage in our roles and reach out to each love both effectively (by showing up on time, readiness , thoughtfulness etc..) and affectively (appreciation for each other, warmth, compassion etc..) and in such an environment, a group will prosper and grow.



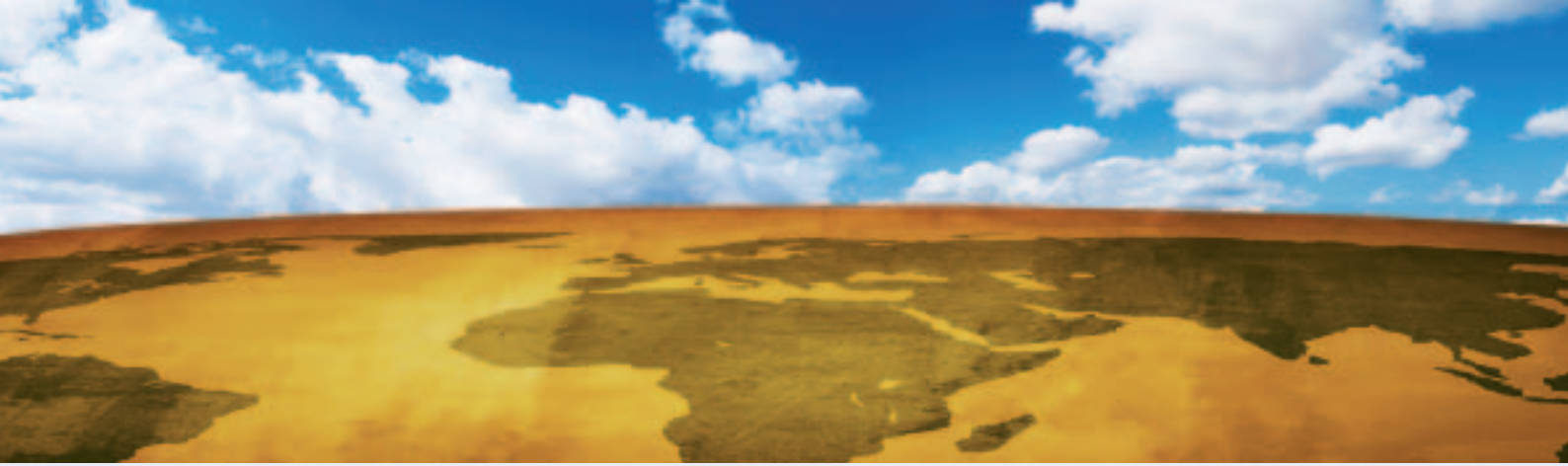
Personal Perspective

by Denis Bergin

A few Mondays ago, I started out from a small town in West Virginia (the state) to drive to Charleston S.C. I was at the end of a week-long trip that had already brought me to Washington DC and Pittsburgh, and bad weather had forced me to change my plans and my route on the way back to base. The result was that I found myself spending the week-end travelling through the U.S. state known for its coal-mining and its social deprivation? although the flip side of that is that much of it is unspoiled and delightful to drive through. As I went, I listened to local radio stations, with their quirky programmes about life in the outdoors (this is huntin', shootin' and fishin' country). How do you know when it's right to imitate a wild turkey call so that it moves towards you and you can take a good shot at it? Why do children have to be twelve before you can take them shooting? On Monday morning I set out from my hotel in soft wet snow on the last leg of my journey, which would take me all day. As I passed through Virginia and into North Carolina, I turned on the radio again, and after a few minutes, heard the 'breaking news' announcement: police had warned that there was shooting in a dormitory at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg (about forty miles from where I was at the time), and were recommending that everyone stayed indoors. Well, I thought to myself, just another Monday morning in the Appalachian Mountains? some kid forgot to leave his gun at home, and decided it would be a good idea to shoot off the few cartridges he had left in the chamber before he went to class. I turned off the radio there and then. How wrong I was. As the scale of the Blacksburg tragedy unfolded, the old reliables came up again: an alienated young man from a good hard-working immigrant family had acted in the way he felt he had to. No other option. We had left him no choice, he told us (and in such a spectacular way too, making some of his video statements between shootings and posting them off to a major television network). The pressure had been there for a long time. He had been rejected by society, not once but a hundred, maybe a thousand times. Those who had noticed him at all had only one answer? get help or we'll commit you to an institution. By the following day, or the following week, they had forgotten him ? too busy to follow up on their instincts or their observations, or even on the sympathy or pity that some of them must have felt for a lost soul. After all, there were 25,999 other students on the campus to be considered plus 7,000 staff, and 3,000 visitors and guests at any one time. Now he would use his anonymity to wreak

revenge. He would fly below the radar. They would learn who he was, and what he had suffered. They would never forget Cho Seung Hui. He was, in the popular judgement, a psycho. How he got to be a psycho, or how he might have been prevented from being one, was not really important now. The students at Virginia Tech would mourn for a few days, and then their sports teams would get back to their normal schedule by Friday, so all would be well with the world again. Except that here and there in the press reports, you'd find the occasional quote that showed some inkling of what the real issues were. The professor who had reported Seung's behaviour and tried to help him, but then lost contact and in fact thought he had graduated. The roommate to whom he rarely spoke but who thought, well, that's how he is. The classmate who wondered if there wasn't something that she could have done. The parents who had known that there was some hint of autism there when he was young but who had been distracted by the pressures of keeping a business going and the difficulty of getting help as immigrants with poor English. The high-achieving sister who had graduated from Princeton and was working for the U.S. government on Iraq war support, but who did not recognise them butcher-brother she never really knew even when he was half normal ('We have always been a close, peaceful and loving family. My brother was quiet and reserved, yet struggled to fit in').

In a country where there are almost as many guns as there are mobile phones (and one is almost as easy to get as the other), it's a miracle that this kind of thing doesn't happen more often. Despite the evidence of Columbine and Oklahoma City (both of which had anniversaries in the same week as Blacksburg happened), this huge nation, with no real provision for accessible health or social services, has cobbled together a system that binds people into some kind of community based on loyalty to the flag, respect and love of family, Mom, apple pie and sporting achievement. Which is usually fine, as long as you're not an immigrant with no interest in sport struggling for acceptance in a place where fifty thousand people are too busy to care. Go Hokies!



GROW.... A Vision for the world

Between 1957 and the beginning of the 1990's GROW exploded on the world. Starting in Australia it soon became adopted by the Government there and developed a network of some 400 groups. It spread, first to New Zealand, and then to Ireland through returning Missionary priest Sean O'Hanlon. A request from prominent psychologist Hobert Mowrer to come to the United States resulted in a massive effort and the creation of over 100 groups within a five year period. This move also resulted in the most thorough research into a mutual help organisation being undertaken. This was funded by a number of foundations and provided hard evidence that GROW really works. Many GROW members inspired by GROW in Australia and New Zealand travelled to America and worked there as fieldworkers or volunteers.

In Australia new sides to GROW's work were being developed. A residential program evolved. A similar venture was undertaken in Illinois. Research has shown that these residential are extremely effective in empowering people towards recovery. Prison groups were started and provided a service and hope to the many people in prison who struggle with mental health difficulties. Ethnic minority groups were started and GROW's Program was translated into a plethora of languages, German, Serbo-Croatian, Vietnamese, Greek, Italian. The World Health Organisation singled GROW out as having the same spreading potential as Alcoholic's Anonymous, and as also having the potential to effect social as well as personal change.

It was against this background that a vision for GROW worldwide developed. We would have three training centres. One in Australia for Asia and the East. One in America for the New World and one in Ireland for Europe and the Middle East. GROW with its combination of non denominational respect for all religions and its acknowledgement of the universal nature of the human being, could be at the heart of community and need, just as much in Iraq as in Guatamala, in Rwanda as in Amsterdam.

Maybe the celebration of 50 years of GROW worldwide is a time to rekindle some of that vision. Here in Ireland we have maybe lead the field in the development of training programmes. If we were to expand into Europe, we certainly have a training model that would allow us to do so. Here's to the next 50 years. Let us give thanks for the thousands of people in GROW who have brought us thus far.

ON THE WAVE OF A HIGH

Today seems brighter than yesterday, things seem clearer so much easier.

Everything has its place, life has a new meaning. In everything and in every way everybody looks brand new.

Things are starting to move faster so to must I. Or I'll be left behind and I'll fall into the black hole again.

Sleep o sleep I must sleep, too scared to sleep, I might die.

It's time to change the world. Only I can do it alone, I have the power like never before. But why me? I'm weak. But I would never let you down.

I would stand alone for you on a mountain top and let them all drop. To save you and only you.

But how can I do it.

Show me the way and I will follow you all the way.

But please don't let me down this time we were here before.

I fell so many times. I could not walk, I could not eat, I could not sleep. I've changed.

I could not do it alone.

Please let someone help me.

I don't care who. I know you showed me before and I could see.

I got scared again I know I'm weak.

Why do you not help me when I get like this?

Why do you want me to lead the way, when you know that I'm so weak?

Doctors come and doctors go. Tablets change but you always stay the same.

I love you and I need you. Someday

I promise you I will find a way.

I know you will be waiting for me.

I will know you and you will know me.

Together we will be forever.

I love you.

ALICE DONOHOE - CARRICK ON SHANNON

Congratulations from

SHANE MACGOWAN

Congratulations and best wishes to all at GROW on your 50th. May you continue for many years to come to promote Mental Health and help people suffering from mental illness to full recovery.

Shane MacGowan

John Lonergan,

Governor, Mountjoy Prison

Fifty years of service is a massive achievement and an equally fantastic contribution to our society. I know that at many times during this period the going was tough but the people involved with GROW did not give up. They had a mission, a vision and a belief. A mission to help and support people to cope and overcome mental illness; a vision that destructive stigma attached to mental illness would over time be removed and a belief that eventually they would succeed. GROW's commitment and endurance has helped to remove much of the darkness and helplessness too long associated with mental illness. In a nutshell, GROW has made a huge positive difference for so many people. Congratulations, thanks and well done to all concerned. With very best wishes for the future.

John Lonergan, Governor, Mountjoy Prison

Dan Neville

Congratulations to GROW to Mike and all on the National Programme in Ireland. I have been aware of your work since 1995 and admire the contribution which you have made to many people. Recovery from mental illness and embracing mental health must be central to the health policy of our state. I encourage you to continue lobbying for recognition of this. I look forward to your continuing contribution to the health and well-being of the people of Ireland

Dan Neville TD

President, Irish Association of Suicidology



Dear GROW,

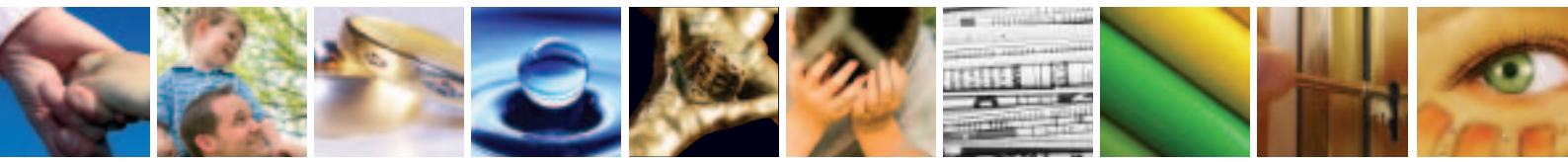
On the Golden Jubilee of the World Community Mental Health Movement, the Mental Health Commission would like to wish the staff, members and participants of GROW in Ireland much success for the continued development of their organisation.

Since its establishment in 1969, the Irish contingent of the World Community Mental Health Movement, GROW in Ireland, has created strong networks of mutual support for people who experience, or have experienced, mental health problems. The success of the organisation is dependent on the actions of its loyal members in the promotion of recovery.

The Mental Health Commission endorses the concept of recovery through empowerment and considers GROW in Ireland as a leading exponent of this approach.

The Mental Health Commission wishes GROW continued success in these changing times in the provision of mental health services in Ireland.

Mental Health Commission



Paradox of our time

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers;

Wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints;

We spend more, but have less;

We buy more, but enjoy less.

We have bigger houses, but smaller families, more convenience, but less time;

We have more degrees, but less sense;

More knowledge, but less judgement;

More experts, yet more problems;

More medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little.

Drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living but not a life;

We've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet our neighbour.

We conquered outer space but not inner space.

We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.

We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice.

We write more but learn less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait.

We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These the times of fast foods and slow digestion; big people and small character;

Steep profits and shallow relationships.

These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses but broken homes.

These are the days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

Remember; spend time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember; say a kind word, give a warm hug because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember to say "I love you" to those you love. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for some day that person will not be there.

Give time to love, give time to speak; give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.



Is the best in life, love & happiness ahead of you or behind you?

www.grow.ie Infoline: 1890 474 474