

Homeless man sleeping in tent discovered dead

A HOMELESS man who is believed to have been sleeping in a tent in Dublin has died.

The man, aged in his 50s, was taken to St Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin yesterday, where he later passed away.

It is believed that a staff member from Gonzaga College found the man unresponsive in Ranelagh and called emergency services.

Gardaí are investigating the death and confirmed they are preparing a file for the coroner's court.

Housing Minister Eoghan Murphy confirmed the man who died had been availing of homelessness supports. He said: 'Tackling homelessness

By Lisa O'Donnell

remains the top priority of Government and the additional 200 emergency beds for those who are sleeping rough will be delivered by December.'

In October, 8,492 people were homeless in Ireland, including around 3,000 children - a 24% increase from last year, according to Focus Ireland.

Campaigner Fr Peter McVerry told the Irish Daily Mail that many homeless people choose to sleep on the streets instead of staying in hostels - as emergency hostels are 'so awful'.

'You're sharing a room with active drug users. People can be very threatening, very

intimidating. A lot of people tell me they feel safer sleeping on the streets,' he said, adding that homeless people must be given their own space in hostels after the 'shattering experience' of being homeless.

In 2014, the death of homeless man Jonathan Corrie made national headlines - and sparked an emergency government response - after he passed away just yards from Leinster House.

However it later emerged that Mr Corrie, who had died of a drug overdose, had been bought two separate houses by his family as part of their ongoing efforts to persuade him to abandon life on the streets.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

How the Mr Men have kept me company for forty years

IT seems that the Mr Men series of books are in my life to stay. After our youngest underwent his initiation, we packed them away thinking that our grandchildren will be next. But, no, those books, many of which have been in my possession for forty years, are back out in full force.

My love affair with the Mr Men began in 1977, when I was only seven years of age. My grandmother was then living in Coventry and I expressed a desire to visit her. And so, that summer, I flew to stay with her in a quaint suburb of the city.

The Queen was visiting Coventry on the day I landed. Elvis Presley died during my vacation. But none of that could compete with my discovery of Mr Bump, Mr Uppity and their friends.

'I am lonely, and I want to go home tomorrow,' I said to my grandmother that first night. 'Of course,' she said, 'we'll have you on the first flight. But first, let me read you one of these.' There, in her hand, was a bunch of little white books which I have to this day.

She read Mr Tickle and I was hooked. I went to sleep knowing that I was staying put for the summer. In that moment, I entered a new world of humorous and heart-warming characters.

Slowly but surely, I amassed the full collection of books. At the core of each was a lesson in good manners, compassion and courage. Their seeming simplicity belied a depth of moral truth.

Years later, I gave the collection to my young cousin who, with his family, was emigrating to California. And there my Mr Men stayed for the next twenty years. They were gone but I could never forget how they shaped my young self.

We were new parents in the spring of 2005. One morning, after a particularly challenging night, a package arrived from America for our newborn. I opened the box and there, smiling up at me, was my old friend Mr Tickle.

They had aged but were all intact. It was like gazing through a portal in time, back beyond the years to a place of youthful joy. I held them in my hands and felt the tears begin to flow.

Regular readers may recall how

central to our boys' lives those books have been. The collection now contains a host of new characters, and has been supplemented with the DVD of the original television series narrated by Arthur Lowe. Through the years, bedtime at the Dooleys would have been inconceivable without the nasally brogue of Mr Nosey.

Lately, however, the Mr Men have remained untouched in their pile. Occasionally, I would burst into an impression of My Lazy or Mr Nonsense. My favourite imitation is that of Little Miss Splendid, who, upon meeting Mr Small derisively declares: 'What a common little man!'

Still, despite my best efforts, I had a feeling the boys had finally outgrown the Mr Men. I had no regrets, for those little characters have walked with us down the decades, teaching us all how to be better people. At their heart, they are stories of transformation, redemption and self-discovery.

Then, one day, I stepped into the car and headed for school. We always begin our journey with a little prayer followed by a chat. But just as we finished saying our prayer, our middle son took a deep breath and said: 'Mr Uppity!'

HE read the book with accents worthy of the Royal Shakespeare Company. We laughed our way to school and chuckled through the rest of the day. And now, each morning, we are treated to one of the Mr Men courtesy of our very own Mr Happy.

My grandmother read Mr Tickle to a lonely child and it changed his life. Now, four decades later, he is being read those same stories by his own child. And do you know, they are as fresh and as funny as when I first sat listening to them that night in Coventry.

Even our youngest, who seemed to have tired of them, has found a new love for my ancient books. I look in the rear-view mirror and ponder him smiling as his brother shows off his acting skills. It is like looking at my seven-year-old self as those stories first gripped my soul.

How could I ever finish with these, my constant companions of forty years? Either way, it seems they will never be finished with me.

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