

CONNECT WEEKLY

HEART TO HEART with the EDITOR



Quote from Matthew Houlihan: "Oh there's only one GOD, and he only made one football team, MANCHESTER UNITED".

Name: Matthew Houlihan
Position: Main Janitor, St James's Hospital, Dublin 8.

How did you hear about career opportunities within Momentum Support? David Brown, Centre Coordinator, SWIC Local Employment Centre assisted me when I had a need and Momentum Support had an opportunity.

What does your role entail? I am a Janitor within the Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing, MISA Building

What are you most proud of? In 2018 I was recognised by Momentum Support through a nomination process for the Irish Contract Cleaning Association Awards, I had received several letters of recommendation from St. James's Hospital including visitors and Momentum Support Management. It was a great honor to receive acknowledgement for my work as Main Janitor, I actually was awarded the Overall Winner Cleaning Operative in the Acute Healthcare Category at the Irish Contract Cleaning Association Awards in 2018. I was delighted to be chosen to represent Momentum Support at the launch of the **Open Door Initiative**. I hope that our clients visit the link below to see how they can give back through the Employment Services.

<https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/case-study/matthew-houlihans-story>

You have a successful reputation built on how you CONNECT with people particularly the patients. I believe in serving the people and I deliver all requests on time. Patients may be worried about health or missing family. I have a ritual where I always check the name board prior to entering the guest's area. I then extend a personal greeting using their name "Good morning Elizabeth" I then proceed to the sink and fill the towel dispensers and await a reply. If I receive it well and good, if I don't, I fully understand they are not well. After all it is a hospital not a hotel. Even when I leave, I say I'll be back.

Are you a Dubliner? Yes, I am a proud Dubliner, born in inner city Dublin, an area locally known as "Maryland". It is located a stone's throw from St James's Hospital at the back. We re-located to number two in the late 60's as my parents needed a bigger room. Ma, Da and the five siblings relocated to number two. My parents came from the LIBERTIES opposite John Lanes Church. The fact I am a local makes a big connection with patients in MISA.

How do you stay so positive? I like my job so that makes me a positive person.

Tell me an interesting fact about your story telling? There was a canal that the Guinness boats used where the Luas is now. They used to travel down to the Guinness Harbour where I played on the boats in the late 60's as a child. In the past during the hard times, when a hole came in your shoe, you would put cardboard in to fill the whole. When a neighbour got a new Lino, the left-over pieces would be left in the garden - so perfect for one's shoes.

How do you spread HOPE? When the patients say they want to go home. I say every day you wake up it's a day nearer to you going home. Many times, they say when all packed to go home. "Thank you, Matthew, and that I had kept them going during recovery"

I hear you are great for lighting a candle? If the patient doesn't respond and appears to be down in themselves. I offer a prayer and suddenly their eyes light up so bright. I light the candle for the intention and take a picture which I share with them on my return. This gives them a lift as they see the candle at St Anthony's feet.

Tell us your view on Biodiversity "Creation". I jumped at the chance when Ian Hyland asked would I cut the grass in Momentum House for Colin Maybin. Verona shared a vision of Biodiversity. Already she awaits a complimentary bee box. I look forward to the wild boarders including pollinator plants and signage on the trees. One Day hoping to educate local children on the species and how they got here. A bench in honour of our founder Colin Maybin so on quieter days he can reflect.

How has it been going through COVID 19? Fearful, as in the beginning some people said no, I understand it was the fear. But If we all say no, we will never win the battle.

Take us down memory lane Matthew. What changes have you seen?

Life is more complicated now with too many choices? When I was younger, I would go to the shop for a bottle milk, a half-pound of butter and a loaf of bread. Now you have a shopping list such as milk low fat, full milk, Super milk and Vitamin D Milk. Oh, how I dream of the smell of the home bakers Saint Catherine's in the Liberties as I would walk past.

What advice would you share with a stranger?

Give encouragement to others as they may be lost. It's hard making decisions or maybe one is just lonely, or maybe someone has just arrived to Ireland and does not know anyone and feels fear of the unknown.





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Left to Right Matthew Houlihan meets Taoiseach Leo Varadkar & Alana Dunican HR Director – Open Doors Initiative September 2018

Historically Momentum Support partners within Employment service providers: are BITCI Ready for work, South Inner-City Employment Partners, Job plus, Employability and more recently Career Leap and AsIAM. We hope going forward we can bring more stakeholder to come on boards as this is a very impactful way to give back. The Open Doors Initiative www.opendoorsinitiative.ie began in September 2018 and Momentum Support was a Founding Partner. Its purpose is to create pathways to employment for marginalised groups including people with disabilities, disadvantaged youth and refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. It has since grown to 45 organisations and 24 Supporting Partners (including Ibec and Chambers Ireland). They are a mixture of multi-nationals, SMEs, semi-states, NGOs and government.

In its first year, they have helped over 2,000 participants and of them 127 secured full time employment, 99 have had a job for at least six months, 49 secured a placement for at least three months, 9 established a business or are self-employed, and 204 barriers to employment were removed (monetary, language, physical or virtual accessibility).

Alana Dunican, HR Director said: "Membership of Open Doors has given us an incentive to help those most in need of training, upskilling, education and jobs, especially now with the effects of Covid 19 on employment. We share a common ethos and values with the other organisations involved - that it is the right thing to do – and to give back and help those who are the future workforce of tomorrow. We are proud to take part in these efforts."

According to Jeanne McDonagh, CEO of Open Doors: "Companies like Momentum Support offer valuable assistance to the people we are helping. Their work instils confidence in participants and helps them build a life and give back to Irish society, on a par with everyone else. The value of this cannot be underestimated. We would encourage other companies to follow their leadership and join us to make a real difference to people's lives.

A CANDLE BURNS FOR ALL SOULS LOST

Candle In The Wind **Elton John**

*Goodbye Norma Jean
Though I never knew you at all
You had the grace to hold yourself
While those around you crawled
They crawled out of the woodwork
And they whispered into your brain
They set you on the treadmill
And they made you change your name
And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never knowing who to cling to
When the rain set in
And I would have liked to have known you
But I was just a kid
Your candle burned out long before
Your legend ever did
Loneliness was tough
The toughest role you ever played
Hollywood created a superstar
And pain was the price you paid
Even when you died
Oh the press still hounded you
All the papers had to say
Was that Marilyn was found in the nude
And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in...*

