



# Fr. Ray Foundation Newsletter

May 2008 Volume 1 Number 1

## Message from Fr. Larry

While Spring comes in the West, Easter brings the hot season and long school holidays in Thailand. Our two schools are very quiet now as the students enjoy a well deserved break from their books. Life at the Redeptorist Home for Street Children is varied with all sorts of useful and fun activities, the most recent a night safari in Tiger Park.

I am happy to send you our newly designed newsletter. We have added photos to enhance the stories we share with you. This has increased the unit cost of printing by only 0.03 US\$. You can help reduce our postage cost by sending your e-mail address to [info@fr-ray.org](mailto:info@fr-ray.org).



*Fr. Patin with 2 birthday girls*

## Potential new students



*A new applicant*

Two days after the Vocational School closed, we held interviews for the potential new students who wish to study with us. Applicants come from all over Thailand. They travel for many hours in the back of a

pick-up truck or on a bus. Many are accompanied by family members. They come in wheelchairs, and on crutches, with arms and legs missing; some with deformities that make people stare. They all are drawn by the hope we offer them of beginning a new life. Two years of education with us and they will have a job and be able to support themselves.

## Time to go home



*Stephanie from Australia with her students*

April is also the time when many of our volunteers leave and new ones arrive. Most come for six months, which means that they are here for a full school term. Volunteering means giving their lives to help the less fortunate. Many leave us in tears of friendship and good memories they will never forget. Helping others has changed their lives too.

Our Drop-in Center is always busier during the holidays. One fifteen year old boy, who looks eleven, traveled from the province of Kanchanaburi to Pattaya. He wanted to have some fun. He had never been to Pattaya before but, like most kids in Thailand, Pattaya is a dream world place to have fun. For many it turns out not to be a place of fun. Rather, a place where they can easily get caught up in human trafficking. Picked up by a local pimp, sold to pedophiles, and beaten if they do not do as they are told. Or the local mafia who force the kids into a life of crime.



*Just one of the many young boys who arrive in Pattaya each day*



Chap from Drop-In Center. Best player



Drop-In Center Team



Children's Home football team

## Great day of soccer

Many of our teenage boys recently took part in a football competition organized by a generous supporter. Teams from the Drop-In Center, the Children's Home and the Pattaya Orphanage were joined by a fourth team who travelled across Thailand from Nong Khai to take part. It was a great day of football, and although it was a 'friendly' competition, all players took it very seriously. Eventual, and surprise winners were the boys from the Children's Home, followed in second place by the Drop-In Center. Third and fourth place were decided against the Pattaya Orphanage and Sarnelli House from Nong Khai with the local team scoring one goal to win the match. All teams received a trophy, and one player from each team was chosen as best player.

One surprise for the kids watching the soccer competition was the arrival of a professional wrestler and actor from the UK. Going by the name of Tiny Iron, he was anything but tiny, and the kids were amazed just how big and muscular he was. Towering well over six feet tall, most of our little Thai kids only barely come up to his waist and he could pick up several children at the same time. He must have been exhausted by the time he left us after all the children had climbed all over him, and when he growled the younger children went running for cover.

## A very sad story

One young girl recently showed up at the Drop-in Center, brought by an older boy who has been visiting us for many years. This young



girl had been sent from a village upcountry by her mother to Pattaya to earn money for the family by selling herself. The stress of the work was too much for her and soon she was hooked on amphetamines. She stayed with us two days while members of our staff counseled her. In cases like this, we have to work very fast and find somewhere suitable where kids on drugs can get help, and also somewhere safe where the pimp can not find them. On the third



Tiny Iron with some new fans



Our boys in their songkran shirts



day, we were saddened by her sudden disappearance. The pull of drugs was just too strong. She has left us, but she knows where we are and that we care and are waiting to help her change her life. We will pray and keep an eye out for her.

## Songkran

The 13th of April, the Songkran water festival started. Songkran is the Thai New year – the beginning of the new cycle of planting and harvesting. At the Redemptorist Children's Home, the kids all wore their most colorful shirts and blouses and performed a very traditional ceremony. The Redemptorists and staff were seated behind a long, low, narrow table. Each child walked the length of the table and gently poured jasmine scented water on the hands of each adult to pay respect and also to wish them happiness for the coming year, and to ask for blessings. When the formal ceremony was over, the real fun began as the water splashing began in earnest.

Songkran festival peaks in Pattaya on the 19th of April. It's unreal to see the local residents and tourists reveling in throwing water at each other, something that could never happen the rest of the year. Our children join right in the fun, throwing, squirting, splashing water on one and all who pass by.

The elderly residents at the Old Folks Home have been through enough Songkran festivals to last a life time. So when the volunteers take them in their wheelchairs for their daily outing down to the shops, they have to tell the small kids lining the lane not to throw water on the old folks. But there is always one little boy who just has to throw a few drops. Ninety

four year old Auntie is not amused.

Down at the Drop-in Center, the kids had a great time. The Center, which just happens to be in Pattaya Central Road, is perfectly located to catch the hundreds of people passing by which means it is a great place to celebrate. Ex-residents from the Center come and wish everyone a Happy New Year, and it is always good to see how some of them have changed their lives for the better. Some even bring their own children to see us.

Our street children got a special Songkran treat on Sunday. The General Manager of the Hard Rock Hotel invited 40 of our children for an afternoon of swimming in the hotel pool. I went to watch the children and was amazed to see how many of the younger ones swim like fish. I looked around for the GM to thank him and suddenly an adult male voice addressed me from the swimming pool. There he was enjoying the relief from the heat swimming with our children. When all had dried off and changed clothes, the General Manager invited the children to dinner.



*Hard Rock Hotel, Pattaya*



*Everyone gets a soaking at Songkran*



*Taking a rest on Songkran Day*

## Farewell to a dear benefactor

We received very sad news on 19 April, 2008. A long time benefactor and close friend of the Redemptorists, Mr Walter Meyer passed away at the age of 93. Mr Meyer was a great supporter of the works of Fr Ray Brennan in Pattaya from the very beginning. We hope our gratitude matches his interest and generosity in helping the poor and disadvantaged.

## Sports day



*School for the Blind marching Band*

A few months back the blind students held their annual sports day. Benefactors and friends packed the school compound to watch in amazement the variety of races and sports that the blind children compete in.



*Mr. Meyer and friends on his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday*

## Updates

We told you in our last newsletter about a little boy named Condo who was abused by deliberately being burned in a bonfire. The burns and sores have healed now. Condo doesn't like to smile for the camera but I assure you he is the life of the Drop-in-Center. He is full of energy, running around, even kicking a soccer ball with the older children. Condo's father has dropped by to visit his son, but there is no way we can believe he will take care of little Condo. He is

not only immature in age; he also is addicted to alcohol. So Condo will be safe with us and will join the first group to move into the homes at Fr. Ray's Village.

Construction of the first four houses at the Fr. Ray's Village is progressing well. At the same time, the future "mothers" are receiving the best training in child care that we can give them. Also construction of the Day Care Center for poor slum children has reached the second story. We will soon decide which slum area and children we can best offer day care too.



*Three year old Condo*

To read more news, see more pictures and watch video films please see our website:  
[www.fr-ray.org](http://www.fr-ray.org)



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