



Fr. Ray Foundation Newsletter

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Feeding our Family

How much Rice can you eat ?

Thai food is popular world wide. Any large city that you visit you will find Thai restaurants. So when I write about Thai food today at the Fr Ray Foundation, I am sure you know what I am writing about - and maybe your mouth will begin to water Let me start by telling you that we serve 2,500 Meals per day and the photo above shows 30 bags of 49 kilos of rice which last a week. If you make the calculation, you will find that we buy 75 tons of rice per year to feed our children and students. The rice we use costs us 1.5 million Baht (42,850. US\$) per year, out of a total food bill of 15.4 million Baht (440,000. US\$), and we are only able to do this thanks to the generosity of our donors and our children's sponsors.



not exercised or eaten properly at home. Soon they get involved in the wide range of sports offered at our school. The exercise is good for their bodies regardless of their disability. It builds up muscles and endurance, and increases their ability to study well and the exercise increases their appetites. Our kitchen provides the food. By the end of the first semester their health and energy has noticeably improved.



Learning full stomach

Once the applicants at the Father Ray Vocational School for young adults with disabilities pass their entrance exam and classes begin, we attend to the health of the students as well. Many arrive who have

Visitors feed our Children

Children living on the streets are at risk of many dangers. One is that they do not have access to a healthy diet. Their bodies are still growing and need the right food to develop properly. The junk food they live on leads to anemia and damage to their health. When they arrive at the Father Ray Drop-in Center for Street Kids, the first thing we do is to give them a medical examination to see if they have any diseases that need to be taken care of. Often it is obvious that they are not getting the nutrition they need to grow. Skin problems and mouth sores point to a lack of vegetables in their diet. Our kitchen serves them 3 regular meals a day. During their stay with us at the Drop-in Center they quickly make progress in putting on weight and gaining energy that young kids their age should have.

Our Blind Students learn how to cook

Many of the children at our School for Blind children not only have the disability of no or very little sight but also have not learned how to live independently. At home they have been over protected by well-meaning parents or guardians. Often they do not know how to feed themselves because others have taken on that task for them. Boonchai is not an uncommon example. When he arrived at our school last September, already 8 years old, he literally did not know how to chew ordinary food, much less how to use a spoon and a fork. He had been fed mushy baby food all his life. Our dining room becomes another classroom. Staff patiently teach the children how to use fork and spoon as the meals are placed before them. They learn how to know what food is before them on their plates and where it is on the plate. By mid-year when you visit the school at meal time you are amazed to watch how normally the children eat their meals. No mess or splatter at all; no need to stand over the child to give help. If you talk to Boonchai today, he will tell you that he loves to eat chicken and he can do it by himself. As the children grow older we see the need to prepare them to live even more

independently by being able to prepare meals themselves. We give them cooking lessons. They learn how to handle all the equipment in the kitchen. The stove is most important and dangerous for a non-sighted person. However, our children learn very quickly and soon can make omelets and other delicious dishes.

Growing up with Nutritious Food

Surveying the slums looking for children most at risk, I notice immediately the lack of any semblance of regular meals for the children living there. There is no cleanliness or hygiene, not even something so basic as soap and water to wash one's hands. The parents are gone to work from dawn to dusk. What can the children eat? Usually junk food and sugar drinks. A very unhealthy diet for young children. And it shows in their skinny bodies. The Father Ray Day Care Center corrects this deficiency in the lives of 120 children from 2 to 6 years old. As soon as they arrive at the Center in the morning, they are greeted with the delicious aroma



of good food already prepared for their morning breakfast. They are growing so fast that their bodies soon show the benefit of the nutritious food we feed them. They receive medical checkups too, to see if they have special needs. Many need dental care as their baby teeth have not come out properly and cavities are common.

Family Life

Life at the Father Ray Children's Village resembles life in a family home. There the children live, eat and play in a family setting. I often join the children at one of the home for dinner and at another home the next morning for breakfast.



I can tell you that it is heart warming to see the children seated around a table with their “mother” and digging into their food with a healthy appetite. We have prepared menus for the “mothers” to use so that the food is varied and nutritious. It also makes the “mothers” work a bit easier. During the meals the children help each other passing dishes. When the meal is over they help clear the table and take turns at the sink washing the dishes.

Happy to cook, especially Cakes

The children at the Father Ray Children’s Home eat in two large dining rooms, one for the boys and the other for the girls. The meals are the same for both groups, and the voracious appetites are the same too. They are children who work hard in school and play hard on the playgrounds. Their growing bodies need good food so that their brains and bodies grow normally. They take turns bringing the food from the kitchen and dishing it out in cafeteria style. They too take turns washing the dishes, cleaning the tables and tidying up the dining rooms. One of the activities the children can join is cooking classes. We have a bakery where the children, both girls and boys, can learn how to make all sorts of pastries. When we celebrate birthdays once a month, it is the cook, together with the children, who bakes the birthday cakes. Cakes and cookies of all kinds come out of the bakery to be eaten by the children or given as gifts to visitors.



When I see that 7 of Diamond in the photo, I know why I could never finish that solitaire game.

Help from Volunteers

We have been blessed with students from a University in the Netherlands who are studying nutrition for their degrees. They have volunteered their time to study Thai foods and record the nutritional value of each vegetable, fruit and other foods. This knowledge is put into real meal menus for our cooks and “mothers” to use to prepare meals. We are confident that what we are feeding our children is scientifically nutritious for them.

Organic Farm

We have reorganized everything at the Father Ray Farm. Now the vegetable plots are producing more and more vegetables for our tables. Fruit trees are supplying good desserts for our children. We don’t use pesticides as they are very expensive and, most of all, dangerous to health. Our produce is safe to eat. Our fish ponds are stocked with fish and we can harvest the fish to eat at regular intervals throughout the year. Already this farming initiative is making a significant impact on lowering our food expenses in the last 6 months.



Benefits of Central Purchasing



Perhaps the single most important department to make our kitchens successful and lower our food expense is our Central Purchasing department. Everybody at the Father Ray Foundation knows "CP" because every morning a pickup will arrive at each project with fresh food, water, and other necessities for the day. Our Central Purchasing means that we can buy wholesale from all vendors; we have bargaining power. The City of Pattaya sends inspectors regularly to make sure the meat products we buy are free of chemical agents that could be harmful to our children's health.

Giving to the Monks

Food is our second biggest expense (salary is the first) and our most necessary item for the health of the children and students. They receive this food free of charge and we are happy to give it to them.



The Thai people have a wonderful custom built into their religious culture of Buddhism which teaches them to be grateful and generous to others. I give you one example of what I am talking about. Sunday morning at the Father Ray Children's Village, as the sun comes over the horizon, the children with their "mothers" prepare food to give to the monks who will soon be passing by on the road. Portions of food are placed in small plastic bags tied shut with a rubber band. Some fruit or dessert is also prepared and placed on a tray. Last Sunday, I stood in the shadows watching this touching ceremony. Two little children each take one edge of the tray loaded with food and together carry it down the driveway to the road. There the "mothers" line up the children, they take off their sandals and wait for the monks to arrive with their begging bowls.



The monks pause before the line of children, the children "WAI" them with respect, and then reverently place food items in each begging bowl. Another "WAI" as the monks walk on, and then the children put their sandals back on and walk up the driveway back home chatting away. Watching from the shadows I was proud of my children sharing some of their food with others, learning an important value for life.

Our total budget is 120 million B aht (3,400,000. US\$) each year to feed and educate and house our children and young people. We get some support from the government, but most of it we have to raise ourselves. We can only do it with the help of our friends.

We wish you a very Happy Easter! May God bless you for your generosity in helping us to give a life and a future to our children and young people with disabilities.

May we remind you that by sending the Newsletter to you via the Internet, we can save a considerable amount of postage. An e-mail from you to info@fr-ray.org is all you need to do. Thank you.

To read more news, see more pictures and watch video films please see our website: www.fr-ray.org



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