

# Fr. Ray Foundation Newsletter

November 2009

## Message from Fr. Patin

As another year comes to an end Christmas will soon be upon us, and although the majority of Thai people are Buddhists and do not celebrate the festive season as in the west, we will be making sure that our children know what Christmas is all about. Here in Pattaya most of the shops, schools and businesses will be open as usual, and with Christmas Day falling on a Friday this year some of our older residents attending college or university will not be able to miss classes. Our two schools, for the blind and disabled students, will be closed for the day, and we get special permission from the many local schools our children attend to keep them off school for this one special day. Traditionally on the 24th December, Christmas Eve, the children from the Children's Home and the Children's Village will visit the local hotels where they will sing a selection of Christmas Carols for the hotel guests, all sung in English, which takes many weeks of rehearsals. Being a tourist resort, shops and bars in Pattaya will celebrate the festive season with staff dressed in Santa costumes, carols will be coming loudly through the speakers and Beach Road will resemble the strip in Las Vegas.



Santa's little helpers

## Christmas Celebration

On Christmas Day there will be much excitement up at the Children's Home and Children's Village as the children know that some time during the day or evening Santa will be arriving. The children get into small groups and rehearse a small song and dance routine which they will perform that evening at the party, and if this year is like past years our girls will spend much of the day preparing themselves for the party, getting their best clothes ready and styling each other's hair, whilst the boys run around getting in the cooks way and trying to guess who will be wearing the Santa outfit this year.

## Review of the year ..

2009 has been a hard year for us. The worldwide financial crisis has forced us to be even more careful with the money you have given to us.

We have made cutbacks and this means that for the second year running we may be unable to give our staff the small pay rise they deserve, and there is very little left to spend on Christmas gifts for the children. We are working hard to develop ways to raise funds and awareness both here in Thailand and abroad, but even though we have had to make savings we will still try to give our children and students the Christmas and New Year parties they expect. Like parents throughout the world, no matter how tight money is we will try to give them a party to remember, and we hope that you may be able to help us. 2009 was a good year in that we now care

for more toddlers, children, young people and disabled students than ever before. We have been able to plan to provide more care at the Father Ray Children's Village, the new team at the Drop-In Center is able to reach more destitute children who need our help, and the Vocational School is now accommodating 50% more students than in 1999.



The shepherds arrive at the Children's Home

## Two Very Special Birthdays...

A few months back in September this year we celebrated two special birthdays here in Pattaya. With 850 children and young people in our care there are birthdays everyday, but this time it was not the birthday of any living person. It was the first anniversary of both the Father Ray Children's Village and the Father Ray Day Care Center and both projects have proven to be a great success.

## ... for our Village Families...

When the Fr. Ray Children's Village opened its doors we soon noticed that there were a few problems, especially as the children were coming to terms with their new surroundings and families. A week after the first houses opened way back in 2008 we took one household out for dinner. It was obvious to us all as to what the problems were; the children did not know each other, they had not found their place in the home and they were not too sure what the relationship with their 'house mother' was meant to be. Within a few weeks we started to see changes,



*Presenting alms to the monks and receiving a blessing in return*

all for the better, and you should see the families today, and that is just what they are, families. The older children take care of the youngsters, they are very protective of the younger ones, and the youngsters try to imitate their older brothers and sisters, and there is a loving mother overseeing everyone and everything. These first four houses at the Village have been such a success that early in September this year building work started on six new houses which will be



*Happy family at the Children's Village*

completed early in 2010, when will welcome more children into our loving homes. To celebrate the first anniversary of the Children's Village we invited nine monks from a local Buddhist Temple to the Village to receive alms from the children, and in return they blessed our homes and the children living in them.

## ...and our Day Care Center

Another great success has been the Father Ray Day Care Center. Just like at the Children's Village there were a few problems at the Day Care Center. For the first few weeks after we opened all you could hear from the Center was screaming and crying.



*Spending their days in safety*

These toddlers were not used to be left all day in a strange place with a hundred and twenty other children; they wanted to be at home with their families. But the teachers worked hard to make sure the children felt comfortable, and now most of the children can not wait to arrive each morning. Motorbikes have hardly come to a stop and the children are jumping down and rushing into class, some even forgetting to 'wai' their mothers and fathers. Friends have been made, the children are learning to interact with others and they are receiving an education, but just as important is that the parents know that their child is safe whilst they go off to work each day.



## A Sad Story, but one with a happy ending

This year we have changed the lives of many children, and I would like to tell you about a little boy who we shall call *Chai*. Living in the slums of Pattaya with his father and younger brother was hard; his mother was convicted of selling illegal drugs and was sent to prison. The local gang leaders in the slum where the family lived were using Chai as a drug mule, transporting him around Pattaya on the back of a motorbike delivering to drug addicts, his pockets filled with heroin, marijuana and methamphetamines; the police are less likely to stop and search a six year old boy than they would an adult. When we visited the slums and invited parents to apply for their child to be admitted into the Father Ray Day Care Center, Chai's father was one of the first to apply, knowing the dangers his son was involved in but due to pressure from the gangs he was unable to protect his child. We accepted Chai, but the gangs were losing money



*Grade 1 students from the Children's Home*

and they continued to put pressure on the father to give up his son. We advised that Chai would be better off living at the Father Ray Children's Home and he soon moved in, but not long afterwards tragedy struck. We received a phone call to say that the father had mysteriously been involved in an accident and was in a serious condition in hospital. We immediately took Chai and his younger one year old brother to the intensive care ward, arriving just in time to say goodbye to their father before he died. Chai returned to our Home, this time with his younger brother, and both are doing well. In May this year Chai started school in Grade 1 and his teachers, both at school and at home, all say he is a bright young boy. We can only imagine what kind of life he would have had if he had remained living in the slums, but thankfully he will never have to go back there.

## Blind Runners



*Our proud Marathon runners*

Each year the Pattaya Marathon takes place in July, starting at 4.30 in the morning when it is still dark and before the sun rises and it gets too hot. This year there were more entries from the Father Ray Foundation than ever before. Many wheelchair dependent students took part in the full marathon and seven students from the School for the Blind took part in the half marathon. Most of the blind students who took part are partially sighted; they have some sight but not enough to be able to attend a regular school. But one student was blind, had no sight at all but she still managed to finish the twenty one kilometer course with a teacher running beside her, staying close and encouraging her all the way. There is nothing these young people can't do once they put their mind to it.

## A remarkable young man

Our students at the Vocational School for People with Disabilities never cease to amaze us. One young man, studying electronic repair, informed his volunteer teacher that he had recently won gold medals at a national swimming competition in the breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle events.



*An inspiration to us all*

Nothing strange in this, people win swimming competitions every day, except that this young man was born with no arms. Many of us were left thinking how he could do all these strokes without upper limbs, easy he told us, it is all in the leg movements; each stroke has a different leg movement and having very strong legs means that he can swim like a fish. He also plays soccer and let me tell you, you would not want to be hit by a ball he has kicked, and due to the strength and flexibility in his legs he is also on the schools' ta-kraw team.



*Ta-kraw the national sport of Thailand*

## Flying not so high

One of the biggest stories to make the national press this year in Thailand is of a twelve year old boy who won a paper airplane flying competition. This young origami expert made a plane which stayed flying in the air for more than twelve seconds, and in turn this has led to a craze where boys and girls and men and women of all ages are folding paper and launching them towards the sky. One of our young boys decided that he too was going to make a plane, but the only paper he could get his hands on was a small square of toilet tissue. Watching closely he copied the folds the older children

were making, then he ran around showing everyone what he thought was the latest model of a super jet, but to everyone else it was just a rolled up piece of paper. He stood with the other children and watched as they launched their designs, then he called for everyone to watch as he threw his airplane into the air, but instead of reaching for the sky it fell straight down and into a small puddle of water. He tried to pick it up carefully, but the paper just disintegrated in his fingers. After a few moments he realised that there was no way he could recover his jet, so he just rolled his eyes, shrugged his shoulders and went in search of a better piece of paper.



*Not yet a champion plane thrower*

## Changing Lives

We have changed the lives of many people in Thailand, and we all work very hard to achieve this, but it is the individual stories, the funny, the tragic and the sad that makes us realise just why we are doing this work. But we can not do this work alone, we may be here in Thailand doing the everyday work but it is you, our loyal supporters who ensure that we can continue changing lives.

This Christmas we will make sure that in all the places our 850 children and disabled students reside their homes are decorated with lights and there will also be a Christmas tree and nativity scene, just like in homes around the world. Can you help to make this Christmas extra special for our children



*The Christmas Angel has arrived*

by sharing with us the cost of buying everyone a Christmas present? Your donation will enable us to put the 'icing on the cake' so to speak for all our children and to be able to celebrate the festive season in a way you and I would want them to.



*What will Santa bring the children this year?*

I know I speak for everyone here in Pattaya, young and old, when I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous 2010.

God Bless to all.

## Fr. Ray Foundation

440 Moo 9, Sukhumvit Road,  
Km 145, Nongprue, Banglamung,  
Chonburi 20260, Thailand  
Tel : +66-38-716628 , 428717  
Fax : +66-38-716629  
info@fr-ray.org www.fr-ray.org

.....  
Bank Account: Bangkok Bank Ltd.  
1. Banglamung Chonburi Branch  
Current Account: 342-3-04125-4  
2. Seacon Square Bangkok Branch  
Current Account: 232-3-02275-2