



Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



September 2012

Message from Miss Joy *Mother to the children of Rose House*



When I first came to work at the Father Ray Children's Village I was very nervous about meeting the children I would be taking care of. I had read their stories and I was horrified by what they had been through in their young lives.

But several years on and we are a family. I have four sons and four daughters, and I love them as if they were my own.

Each morning I get up early to make breakfast, I want them to go to school with a full belly, then I wake the boys first as they usually take longer to get out of bed than the girls. They all go for a shower, and every morning they seem to get water all over the house. The older children help the younger ones wash and dress and then we all sit down together for breakfast.

Once I have waved the children off to school our home is a very quiet place, but there is much to do; the boys and girls have separate bedrooms, there is a kitchen and living room and all need cleaning. Once that is done there is all the laundry to keep me busy, and then I prepare the evening meal, choosing two dishes that I know they will all like.

As soon as the children arrive home I make them change out of their uniforms and then I run to the shared washing machine to wash the shirts and blouses. Usually we buy two uniforms for each child before the new school year starts in May, but

due to budget cuts this school term we were only able to buy one, and I want my children to go to school each day in a clean uniform. I want them to feel proud to be wearing their uniform.

In the warm weather the wet shirts and blouses dry very quickly, but during the rainy season it takes a lot longer so I place them in front of the fan. Once they are dry and ironed I hang them in their children's bedrooms, ready for the next day.

My eldest daughter, Mine, is twelve years of age and regularly comes first in her class in most subjects. Frank is also twelve, the oldest boy in the house, and for a while we had many problems as he spent more time playing truant from school than actually attending classes. But now he is a good student, and his teachers are happy with his progress. Tony and Condo were born just a few months apart and are the best of friends. If you see one you will soon see the other, and while they are not the cleverest students in Grade 3, no matter how well they do in their studies I am equally proud of all my children.

Each evening we sit down together as a family for dinner. Starting with the youngest, who is attending kindergarten, I ask them all about their day. I am sure there are many parents who ask their children what they learned at school, and they regularly get the same reply as I get, 'nothing'. After the children have done their chores I help them with their homework, before it is time for bed.

At the end of the day, when all the work is done I make my way upstairs to bed. But before I go to my own room I quietly go into the bedrooms, tuck the children in their beds, give each of them a kiss and I think to myself that I have the best job in the world.



Rally 1479

There was a huge cheer, as well as a big sigh of relief, when, on the morning of Saturday 23rd June, eighteen wheelchair using students arrived in the northern city of Nong Khai to signal the end of Rally 1479.

Rally 1479 started forty nine days earlier on May the 7th when the students left the Redemptorist Vocational School for People with Disabilities in Pattaya. Each day they covered a minimum of thirty kilometers, and no matter how busy the traffic, how heavy the rain fell or how high the temperature reached they never stopped.

At each town they arrived at the students held a workshop, inviting local people to see for themselves just what a person with a disability can achieve.

The workshops were also a chance for local people to learn more about the facilities and rights that are available to people living with a disability, and more than ten thousand came seeking advice and to give support.



For one thousand four hundred and seventy nine kilometers, or 919 miles, the students overcame any problem that arose; exhaustion, illness, mechanical breakages, punctures and the weather, and as they crossed the finish line there were tears of joy from relatives who had traveled from all four corners of the Kingdom to meet them.

Having a disability does not mean these students have no ability. They crossed the country in a way that would seem impossible to most and they did it to inspire others. They have been watched by millions on every national and local television news broadcasts, people have lined the streets of cities, town, villages and hamlets to support them and

hand them cold water to cool them down and rice to give them strength.

They have shown that having a disability does not mean they are disabled.



Inaugural journey

There was much fanfare at Bangkok's main train station recently when the Deputy Minister of Transport, in front of more than three hundred people with disabilities, officially opened two new train carriages that are specially adapted for people with disabilities.

Khun Suporn tum, former student, teacher and principal of the Vocational School for People with Disabilities, now Managing Director of the Father Ray Foundation, and himself a wheelchair user, was one of the first to board the train for its inaugural journey from Bangkok to Nong Khai.

The Vocational School in Pattaya has long been a campaigner for disability rights and for people with disabilities to be treated as equals in society, and this recent development has been a great breakthrough.

Once the dignitaries had inspected the new carriages more than two hundred students boarded the train for the over night journey across the Kingdom.



After taking advantage of the sleeping bunks and reclining chairs everyone arrived in Nong Khai refreshed and ready to welcome the participants of Rally 1479 as they crossed the finish line.

Ninth Anniversary



Each year on the evening of the 16th of August the children of Pattaya come together to remember Father Ray on the anniversary of his death.

It is not a sad occasion, there are no tears when people remember his

passing, instead there are smiles as everyone remembers the life he gave in devotion to others.

Many of our younger children, and our new students, do not remember Father Ray, most of our children were not even born when he passed away nine years ago in 2003. But they know of him, and they know what he did to ensure that they could have a good life.

Before meals at the Children Home and Children's Village, as well as at the Day Care Center, a special prayer is said. The children thank God, thank their parents, thank their teachers and finally they thank Father Ray.

Statues of Father Ray are standing at the School for the Blind, Children's Home and Village and at the Drop-In Center and all the children wait the statue as they go off to school each morning. Placing their hands together, they raise them slightly and then bow their heads. No one asks them to do this, their teachers have not ordered them, but they do it out of respect to Father Ray.

New recruits

With the new changes at the Father Ray Day Care Center the new and young arrivals are giving our nannies a lot of work.

It is very hard for the youngest children watching their parents leave each morning. They scream and cry, fight to get away from the nannies and it is heartbreaking to see the tears falling down their faces. Every time they hear the engine



of a motorcycle passing they run to the door like it is time to go home.

But as the days have passed many of the new arrivals are getting used to their new environment. They enjoy watching cartoons on the large television screen, and while a few will not allow anyone to get near to them others



will sit close to the nannies and volunteers.

To calm the youngsters there is a large selection of toys for them to play with, and they are also learning to play with other children, though some of the children do not like to share their toys and want everything for themselves. But they will soon learn to share.

These toddlers do not understand why their parents have left them with us. But for the parent to be able to go off to work knowing that their child is safe must ease a lot of worries.

Full to capacity



The number of children with special needs who come to us for help increases each week. We are short of space, do not have much facilities or equipment for these youngsters but they are always so glad to be with us.

Many have been isolated for most of their young life. Unable to attend a local school and often shunned by neighbours, life has not given them much happiness. And yet as soon as they arrive they have a constant smile on their young faces.

On their afternoon walk around the complex they can usually be heard before they are seen. The sound of their laughter brings a smile to all our faces.

School Uniform Appeal

The school year here in Thailand starts in early May. We only have two semesters, with no breaks for Easter, Christmas or half term holidays, just two semesters of five months each.

All school children must have a regular school uniform, as well as a sports kit, Scouts uniform and a tunic that is designed by each individual school and worn on special occasions. In April we usually purchase each child two uniforms, enough to last the whole school year.

However due to lack of funds earlier this year we were only able to purchase one regular school uniform and we are in urgent need to be able to purchase a second uniform for the November to March term, and we hope that you can help.

Please help us to purchase new uniforms for Mine, Frank, Condo, Tony and all the other children here at the Foundation for the new school semester. An average price of the new uniform (shirt or blouse, shorts or skirt, socks and underwear and many children will need a new pair of shoes) is **1680 Baht (US\$53 - £35 - €44)**



Wai Khru

On the last Thursday in June at the School for the Blind the annual Wai Khru, or Teachers Day, ceremony takes place. This is the day that students pay respect to their teachers and there is a lot of preparation before the actual day.

The children make beautiful floral arrangements which a representative from each class presents to their teacher. It takes many hours, and a lot of patience, to produce these gifts, but the children, young and old, know that without their teachers they would not have the education and the chance of an independent life that they now have.



And finally...

At the Father Ray Children's Home our children attend eighteen local schools, and the youngsters living at the Children's Village attend five different schools.

Our young girls take a lot of pride over their appearance and try to keep clean and tidy. But it is a different story when it comes to our young boys. They go to



school looking clean and tidy, but we are always surprised at just how dirty some of them are when they come home.

Two nine year old boys recently got off the bus at the Children's Home one afternoon, filthy dirty from head to toe. Miss Pom, manager of the Home, asked one of the boys what had he been doing to get so dirty, and he proudly told her that he was the goalkeeper in a soccer match, which he won, then he had a wrestling match, which he won, and while waiting for the school bus to arrive he climbed some trees to collect mangoes.

She then asked the second boy why does he come home every day filthy dirty, and with a smile on his face came his reply, 'because I'm a boy'.

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