

NEWS LETTER

DECEMBER 2012



We never turn a needy child away

Message from Khru Pae

Manager of the Father Ray Outreach Work & Drop-In Center



I have been working for the Father Ray Foundation for almost eighteen years and have had many jobs in the different projects. For the past few years I have been manager of the Drop-In Center for Street Kids and since I have been here I have been shocked at the reasons why children come to us and also amazed at just how strong they are.

I never know when a new child or teenager will arrive at the Drop-In Center, or how long they will stay. In many cases I do not even know where they come from. But the main reason that they arrive at the Center is that they have nowhere else to go. Many are from families who can no longer care for them while others are running away from a life of poverty and abuse.

The Drop-In Center is only a temporary place of residence for the children until a more suitable place can be found. Some return to their families, the older boys move into our Half Way House, but most will find a new home at the Father Ray Children's Home or the Father Ray Children's Village.

For the majority of the children who arrive at the Drop-In Center celebrating Christmas is something they have never done before. A few days before Christmas in 2010 a six year old boy arrived at the Drop-In Center. His mother was an alcoholic, drug addicted prostitute who walked the streets of Pattaya. If she made any money her first priority was to buy alcohol and drugs. If she had any money left over then she bought food for herself and her son. For many hours each day this little boy was left on his own on the beach while his mother went off to work. One day one of my outreach workers made contact with the mother who in turn agreed her son should come and live with us. I remember the day he arrived, seeing a very sad, shy and timid little boy, who missed his mother and cried and cried until he exhausted himself. The life he had with his mother, being left on his own for long periods and going to sleep feeling hungry was the only life he knew, that was normal for him. So coming to live at the Drop-In Center was a big upheaval in his young life.

After a few days he started to play with the other children. He helped to decorate the Center ready for Christmas, and though he did not know what Christmas was, he was smiling and enjoying himself. He even helped the cook prepare the food and he loved singing along to Jingle Bells, and even though he did not know the words he made them up as he went along. When Santa Claus arrived many of the young children ran for cover. They were not used to seeing foreigners, especially one dressed in a red suit and wearing a long beard. But this little boy was not fazed, he had spent many hours on the beach and I am sure he had seen worse sights there than what was standing before him.

Giving a gift to a child here in Thailand is not the same as in other countries. Here the gift is not open in public, it is opened in private, but we asked this little boy to open one of his gifts. It seemed to take him ages to open his gift, making sure he did not rip the paper. Eventually the gift was open and I will never forget the smile on his face. Inside was a pair of shorts and a t-shirt, not expensive, but I believe it was the first brand new clothes he had ever received. It was like he had received the latest designer clothes. He could not wait to put them on, pose for photos and show everyone his new outfit.

This little boy is now living at the Father Ray Children's Village. He lives with his new family, a mother and three other boys who have become his brothers. He started school in May this year and he is doing well in his studies. But more important is that he is happy.

We recently had a film crew arrive from a very famous organization who wanted to make a film about our children, and they selected this little boy because he looked good on film. He was very excited about being a 'superstar', but after a few hours he started to get bored and eventually he refused to do any more filming.

The arrival of a large bar of chocolate ensured that he continued filming. But he soon realized that if he refused to do any more filming he would receive more chocolate. It was amusing to watch the film crew running off to the nearest shop to buy chocolate. At the end of the day the film crew had all the shots they needed and the four brothers had eaten so much chocolate there was no need for their mother to cook a meal that evening.

London 2012 Paralympic Games

During both the Olympic and Paralympic Games that were held in London earlier this year we were all glued to the television watching our Thai athletes competing. Unfortunately the Thai Olympic athletes did not do well, only winning two silver and one bronze medal. However, at the Paralympics our athletes did much better. Of the fifty Thai athletes competing at the Paralympics, eight were former students from our Vocational School for People with Disabilities.

Once again Suppachai Koysub, former student and teacher at the school, had us all cheering as he competed in the 4x400 meter wheelchair relay race. Even though the race did not take place until the early hours of the morning here in Thailand, children and students from all projects were up, sitting in their pajamas and cheering the Thai team to silver medal place.

Another former student, Watcharaphon Vongsa, won a gold medal in the team boccia competition. Other former students from the school competed in powerlifting, wheelchair racing, swimming and rifle shooting.

Supachai, accompanied by three other Paralympians recently visited the Pattaya campus where they started their sporting career. Wheelchair racers, Sukhum Namlun and Sakchai Yimbanchang, together with powerlifter Narong Kasanun, were given a rapturous welcome by the students and teaching staff on their return.

The next Paralympic Games will take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and we hope to have more students from our school taking part.



most students are able to find their way around the school. They can climb the stairs, make their way to class and they even learn to cross the busy road to visit the local shop.

The culmination of the year long anniversary celebration will be in April next year when Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Crown Princess of Thailand and Patron of the School for the Blind visits to officially open the new vocational training department. Last time the Princess visited in 2007 she graciously joined with the Thai music group and played a selection of traditional tunes, a big honour for our children.

Message from Father Peter

It does not seem like two years since we all got together to have our picture taken. The last time we all gathered like this was for our Christmas party last year. It was the first time we had organized such a large party, but it was wonderful to see all the children and students mixing together and having fun. The Chinese banquet made sure no one went hungry and there was great excitement once Santa Claus arrived.

This year we will once again organize a party for all the children and students and we hope that you can help. Christmas is a time when families come together and this is what we wish to do, it is just that our family is somewhat larger than most. But for many of our children we are the only family they have.

We will also present each child and student with a Christmas gift. It will be beautifully wrapped in shiny paper and watching the smile on the faces of the younger children makes all the hard work and organization worth while. A few days before Christmas each school and home will be decorated, the lights on the Christmas trees will be switched on and the day before Christmas the children will visit local hotels to sing carols for the guests



Can you help to make this Christmas as fun filled and memorable as last year's?

We ask that you help us to purchase gifts for all our children and students.

Your donation of £20, £25 or US\$33 will ensure the children here in Pattaya have a Christmas to remember.

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Redemptorist Foundation for People with Disabilities

Father Ray Outreach and Drop-in Center

Father Ray Children's Village

Father Ray Children's Home

Father Ray Day Care Center

Redemptorist Vocational School for People with Disabilities

Pattaya Redemptorist School for the Blind



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AIRMAIL

Open carefully as a big picture is inside