

# Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



December 2013

## Message from Father Peter

Your continued support really makes a difference in the lives of the underprivileged children under our care and we thank you. Over the past twelve months there has been a lot of changes. Many students from our vocational school have graduated and while we say farewell to one group we have welcomed a whole new set of students, all eager to start their studies which we know will give them the opportunity to change their lives. At the same time the number of children coming to us for help continues to grow and our teenagers seem to be getting taller by the day; it must be the nutritious food we are giving them. Just as in many countries around the world, the cost of living is increasing almost every week in Thailand. We don't always notice when the price of food and petrol rises by a small amount, but since we pay our invoices by cheques on a monthly basis, we can see how much the cost of almost everything is rising.

We are doing what we can to save money. We now have two chicken houses, mushrooms huts, fish tanks, a pig sty, fruit trees and vegetable patches which are producing fresh food for our children to eat. We have reserved a piece of land where volunteers will plant 150 lime

trees, an expensive fruit to buy, but an essential ingredient in Thai cooking. It is just over a year ago since we opened our first chicken house with the arrival of almost two hundred birds. In that time we have had a daily supply of fresh eggs and as local prices for eggs has risen almost monthly, we have saved more than 150,000 Baht (US\$5,000, €3,500, £3,000). We have now constructed a second house and are waiting the arrival of a further three hundred birds.

Unfortunately, in early October the rains started and were especially heavy this year. Along with the rains we had a lot of thunder and lightning storms which caused several trees to come crashing down and our large fish pond over flowed and flooded our chicken house and pig sty. Due to the flooding, our pigs, and newly born piglets, had to share a very small piece of dry land with our ducks, all of whom stopped laying eggs (I would have done the same) due to the stress of living with the pigs. It took several days to chop up all the fallen trees and for the water to subside back to its normal level, and the pigs now seem happy to be back in their proper home and we are getting fresh duck eggs each morning.



## Sporting legends

We received a call a few months ago from a local bar offering to donate a pool table, which we accepted. A few weeks later we received another phone call from another bar offering another pool table, which we once again accepted and both tables were placed in the Children's Home.

Pool and snooker are both popular sports in Thailand and if we let them, our children would play all day every day. We allow them to play only at certain times, such as the weekends or once they have finished all their homework. We have discovered that letting the children know that if they misbehave they will not be allowed to play has seen a decrease in misbehaviour, especially among our younger boys.

In September, the children were very honoured to welcome two sporting legends to the Home. Former World Snooker Champion from Ireland, Ken Doherty, and one of the most famous men ever to hold a snooker cue, Jimmy White, popped in after competing in the Six-Reds Snooker Tournament, which is held each year in Bangkok.



After a traditional Thai greeting the two visitors spent the afternoon playing against the children, signing autographs and posing with them while numerous photos were taken. It was a day our children will never forget, and since that day the younger boys have been attempting to perform the trick shots that the visiting professionals performed. One or two have even decided that they would like to become professional pool players when they are older; as long as they finish school and graduate from college we will give them all the support we can to let them achieve their dreams.

## 10th Anniversary Memorial Mass

In August, we held the 10th anniversary Memorial Mass for Father Ray. More than one thousand people attended; friends, supporters and children, past and present. Only a few of the children currently living at the Children's Home, and a handful of our blind students, ever met Father Ray, but each and every child and student in our care today knows who he is and what he did during his lifetime.

But two people who new Father Ray very well, and who flew from

Texas in the United States to attend the ceremony, were his younger sister, Sharron, and his niece Amy. They came to attend the service, to remember Father Ray and also to witness for themselves that the work he started is continuing, and they were not disappointed. They met the youngsters at the Children's Village. At the Father Ray Children's Home they were entertained with traditional Thai dancing from the young girls living in Purtell House which her family sponsored, and the boys gave an exhibition of Muay Thai. The students with disabilities showed off their English skills, the youngsters at the Pattaya School for the Blind sang for them



while the toddlers at the Father Ray Day Care Center all demanded hugs. For Amy, who was making her first ever trip to Thailand, it was an experience she will never forget. Their approval has shown us that we are doing things right, and following in the vision of Father Ray. Following the Memorial Mass a procession made its way past Father Ray's final resting place. People and children of all ages stood quietly as they waited for their turn to pay respect and lay a single red rose in Father Ray's memory.





## Unhappy beginnings



Before we made changes in the age of the children we accept at the Father Ray Day Care Center, the children, then aged three to seven, were old enough to understand that at the end of the day their mother would be coming to collect them. Now the children are much younger, just one and two years of

age, and for most arriving at the Center it is a traumatic experience. Coming to the Center may be the very first time these toddlers have been separated from their mother and coming to a new building with so many other children is scary. No matter how many times we tell them that they will be returning home at the end of the day, all they see is their mother waving goodbye to them. No matter what we do, they never stop crying and watching the door, hoping that the next time it opens it will be their mother standing there.

And then one day it all changes. It is as if the toddlers realize that their mother will be coming back for them, they will see her again and the Day Care Center is not as bad as they think it is. We continue to provide a nutritious breakfast to every child as soon as they arrive each morning as we know that many families will have no food at home. After lunch the children take a nap, accompanied by a bottle of milk. A light snack is provided before they leave for home and recently we have started to provide many children with food to take home so we know the children will not go to sleep feeling hungry.

## A Royal Opening

The celebrations to mark the twenty five year anniversary of the Pattaya Redemptorist School for the Blind culminated with the opening of the new Pattaya Vocational School for the Blind. We were very honoured that Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn found the time to travel to Pattaya to preside over the opening ceremony.

Her Royal Highness has been patron of the School for the Blind for many years and it was a great honour for the students and teachers to welcome her to the School.



The vocational training center will now offer the blind students the opportunity to continue their education from grades ten to twelve as well as receiving vocational training which will help them become more independent and employable.

The first group of students were learning new skills from the very first day. Not only are they continuing their education to grade twelve, there is also time to study computers, languages, the art of massage, cooking lessons, business skills, arts and crafts and music. Now our blind children have the opportunity to be educated from kindergarden classes up to the end of high school and also learn skills which will give the chance to find a job.

## Signed by a legend



Legendary award winning Canadian poet, singer, songwriter, musician, novelist and artist Mr. Leonard Cohen, has generously donated a signed copy of one of his works of art to us, and it could be yours, if you are the highest bidder in our on-line auction.

Better known for his Platinum selling albums, his Grammy Lifetime

Achievement Award and his 2008 entry into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Mr. Cohen is also an accomplished artist whose works have become collector's items.

We have a webpage dedicated to this exclusive work of art where you can make your bid. The auction will close on January 11th next year, the National Children's Day in Thailand.

To see the art work which is signed by Mr. Cohen please visit our website [www.fr-ray.org/leonardcohen](http://www.fr-ray.org/leonardcohen)

## Christmas Appeal



Christmas is coming and already our children are looking forward to 'The Big Party'. For the past couple of years we have gathered together all our children, students, volunteers and workers and given them a party they will remember throughout the year.

While the children are feasting they are entertained with performances by our workers and as usual it is the volunteers who put on the best performance, ending with thousands of pieces of candy being thrown into the audience and hundreds of children and students all rushing forward to see how many they can collect.

Awards are presented to those children who have done well at school and all the children are called to receive their Christmas gifts.

Can you make sure that this will be another Christmas that our children will never forget? Any donation you make will go towards providing a Christmas party for our children; the food, the decorations and of course the beautifully wrapped Christmas presents.

## Double your money

Our appeal to raise funds to construct the Father Ray Center for Children with Special Needs is going well, but there is a long way to go yet, and every donation we continue to receive is very welcome.

Each year the UK based Thai Children's Trust takes part in 'The Big Give', a charity drive where every donation made on a particular day and starting at a set time is doubled, and this year the money raised will go to the much needed facility for children with special needs.

So, if you donate £1 this will be doubled to £2, £100 becomes £200, and at no charge to the donor. And if that is not good enough, if you are a UK taxpayer then your gift will be worth an extra 25%. It doesn't get any better.

You do not have to be in the UK to donate, but you must donate on the 5th of December, starting at 10am UK time. Therefore if you are in the US, then you will need to make a donation early morning, and late at night for our friends in Australia and New Zealand.

There is a finite amount in the 'matching pot' each day, so to be sure your donation will be doubled



go to the link below to TCT website, where you can click through to see if matching funds are available. If not you will see a notice asking you to come back the next day.

Check out the London Trust's website for more details [www.thaichildrenstrust.org.uk/the-big-give](http://www.thaichildrenstrust.org.uk/the-big-give)

Finally, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Prosperous and Happy New Year 2014.

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