

# Father Ray Foundation

## Newsletter



March 2014

### Message from Brother Denis

On Christmas Day, with your help, there were smiles on the faces of so many children. To see a smile on a child's face is the most wonderful thing in the world. A happy child will grow healthier, will study more, will do better at school and will become a better citizen. That is the long term outcome resulting from your support of the underprivileged children under our care. "The children look very happy". This is what we hear from the many visitors to our various projects. We have been blessed with outstanding personnel at all of our projects.

I do not have children of my own, but I have learned what it means to be a parent. Just like a father, I have great hope for all our children and I worry a lot about them too. I rejoice when they succeed and I am sad when they don't. I have a heavy heart when they are sick. When I see them happy, playing and laughing, it gives me renewed energy for the office work I have to do. You can imagine that, with the number of children we have under our care, I go through all kinds of emotions every single day. As a child, I did not know how much worrying my parents went through. Now I know. It is with tears in my eyes that I recall the last words my father told me before he had a stroke and became paralyzed and no more able to speak. With a photo of my

brother and myself that had been published in our local newspaper, he said: "I am proud that I was able to send both of you to university and I am overjoyed to see both of you graduate with honor. This is my inheritance to both of you."

Every one of our children that has the ability for higher education will have the opportunity to go to university, even if I have to beg for the money to pay for it. However, I know that not all our children will graduate from university, but I will do my best to make sure they have an education that will allow them to become independent, able to provide for themselves and their family and be valuable members of society. This was Father Ray's dream and it is also my dream. You share that dream with all of us at the Father Ray Foundation since you are the ones that make it possible. That dream, because of your support, is becoming a reality every day. Education is the only way to break the cycle of poverty.

For the 22 years that I have been at the Foundation, 11 of which were spent with Father Ray, it has been my job to manage the money you send us, and to make sure it is spent carefully and wisely, ensuring all our children are well fed and get the education they deserve. I also oversee the Father Ray Children's Village, and visit the children every single day, so I see first hand how much progress they make, and how living in a settled family gives them the chance of a normal life, and success in the future.



## Christmas Lunch



The Christmas and New Year festivities have come and gone and once again I know our children had a time to remember.

In early December, a generous donor presented us with a donation and requested it be used to

give the children a treat at Christmas. But while most expats and tourists in Pattaya were enjoying the Christmas festivities on December 25th, for the majority of local Thais it was just another normal day. Schools were open and most children living at the Father Ray Children's Home set off for school as usual before the sun was up.

Seventeen of our teenagers attend a nearby catholic school on scholarships, so they had the day off. We asked if they would like to go out for Christmas lunch. Yes, they replied, can we go to KFC? Definitely not, we told them.

We had explained to Khun Pom, the manager of the Home, all about Christmas lunch. After learning about the importance people put on having that one special meal with their families and loved ones on Christmas Day, she decided that it would be good for her children, her family, to have a special meal together.

Most days, meals at the Home are rushed, with children arriving late from school or rushing off to play sport or to do their homework and chores.

On the afternoon of the 25th, Khun Pom arranged for 86 very excited children and teenagers to return home early from school and together they all travelled to a

nearby restaurant for Christmas lunch.

There was not a turkey to be seen, no stench of Brussels sprouts and no Christmas pudding was served, instead the children enjoyed a delicious meal of seafood.

For many of the children, it was the first time they

had ever eaten in a restaurant. For newcomers to the Home, it was the first time they received a Christmas present. But for all the children, it was the one time they could all eat together, enjoy a delicious meal, receive a gift and have fun without worrying about school work, homework or anything else.

This is the start of a new tradition at the Father Ray Children's Home, and before leaving the restaurant young Jack asked "Can we come again tomorrow?" He will just have to wait another year for his next Christmas lunch.



## The 'Big Party'

On the evening of the 26th December almost eight hundred children and students got together for the annual "Big Party", and it would be very difficult to describe the amount of noise they created.

Food was served buffet style and there was so much food to choose from that most of the children did not know where to start; spicy papaya salad, grilled chicken, fermented fish, noodles, satay sticks, fresh fruit and all washed down with a selection of coloured sugary drinks.



Games stall were set up, with prizes to be won, and all for free, which caused long lines of anxious children and students waiting their turn.

Children and students from each project performed a song or dance routine and there was also a singing competition.

The toddlers from the Day Care Center discovered that jumping around the stage was much more fun than performing their rehearsed dance routine.

The wheelchair dancers astounded everyone with their tricks, while the boys from the Children's Home performed a "Battle of the Boy Bands" which had all the teenage girls screaming.

But everyone agreed that the stars of the whole evening were two students from the School for the Blind. Five year olds Ole, dressed in a white suit, and Fah, wearing her favourite white satin dress, were escorted onto the stage, they took hold of their microphones and sang one of the most popular Thai pop songs ever written. Not only were they both very cute to look at, but they sang with the most amazing voices. No one listening could believe how two young children could sing with such powerful and mature voices.

Once they sang the last note of the song there was cheering and applause from everyone watching and so many money garlands were placed over their heads they were almost invisible.



## Happy at last

While driving to work each morning one of our workers would pass a young couple of garbage collectors, who would spend the whole day picking up other people's waste in the hope of selling it for a small price. While this young man and his wife were collecting the rubbish, their three year old son would sit on the wagon amongst all the filthy dirty waste.

This young boy never seemed to smile, he always had a sad look on his face and he just sat there doing nothing; no toys and nothing to keep him occupied.

One day our worker stopped and spoke with the parents and mentioned the possibility of their son attending our Day Care Center, they agreed, but they could not afford the transport. It was agreed that our worker would transport this young boy to the Day Care Center and home again in the afternoon.

For the first few days the three year old just sat there, not knowing how to interact with the other children. But once he started to get used to his new surroundings and the other children he started to smile, and he started to enjoy his time each day.

Not long after, his father passed away and his mother came to us for help as she could no longer take care of her son. She is uneducated, she is sick, she had no job, no money, no support and although she loves her son she knew she could not provide for him, so we accepted her son into our care.

He now has lots of friends, he goes to school each day, he never goes to bed feeling hungry and he is a happy child.





## It's Freezing...

Our children don't usually take much interest in what is going on in the world, they are often too busy with school and home work, playing sports or being with their friends. But recently they have been taking an interest in the weather conditions around the world. The heavy snows in North America, the storms and floods in Europe and the heat in Australia, but nothing has kept them more interested than the weather here in Thailand.

Most people imagine Thailand to be hot all year round, but this January has been the coldest for several decades. We do not have the snow



and frost that many have suffered this year, but once the sun has gone down at the end of the day the temperature dips from an average of 32°C to a very cool 25 degrees.

This means that our children leave the Children's Home or Children's Village to go off to school each morning, or our toddlers arrive at the Day Care Center, wearing jumpers, hats, coats, scarves and gloves. Some look like they are off on an Arctic expedition, we don't know how they would cope if it got really cold.



## Happy, Smiling Children

It was suggested recently that we here at the Father Ray Foundation should do what many other charitable organisations do and instead of showing happy children and students we should show photos of sad children. Apparently this would bring in more support. This may be the case, but we feel this would be wrong because our children are not sad.

Visitors are surprised when they meet our children and students and see just how happy they are.

Many of our children are orphans, victims of abuse and neglect, but we



cannot change what happened. Nor can we change the fact that many of our students with disabilities were treated unfairly and seen as second class citizens.

But what we can do is give those children their childhood back. We can give them the love they deserve and we can make sure they know they are worthwhile.

We can give our disabled students the confidence and self esteem so they can hold their head high and we can bring a smile to their faces.



This is why you will only see happy children, not just in our newsletters, but also on our website or on our Facebook page, and your continued support ensures our children and students remain a happy bunch.

**We really wish you could come and see for yourselves.**

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