

Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



June 2015

Why do children have to suffer?

Message from Brother Denis

During the Pope's visit to Asia earlier this year, a weeping 12-year-old girl asked how God could allow children to become prostitutes, moving Pope Francis to hug her and appeal to everyone to show more compassion. "She is the only one who has put a question for which there is no answer and she wasn't even able to express it in words but in tears" was the Pontiff's reply.

I do not have a better answer, but I can tell you that the situation in Thailand is the same for many children.

For the children who come to us for help, for whatever reason, they may be orphaned, abused, abandoned or neglected, or just from very poor families, we cannot change their past, but we can change their present and provide them with the opportunity of a better future.

When we take our visitors to the Children's Village, the Children's Home or the Outreach Work and Drop-In Center, all the children seem to be happy and leading a normal life.

The suffering they have been subjected to is not visible. The childhood they had been deprived of has been returned to them, but the wounds have not healed completely.

It is only when we relate a few of the horror stories that our visitors realize how inhumane some people can be.

The best medicine for those deep hurts is the unconditional love that we bring to them on a daily basis.

For our staff, looking after the children is not just a job, it is a vocation. Their dedication inspires and encourages our children. Their caring makes the children feel worthwhile; it builds their confidence and gives them hope for the future. This is what brings them the happiness that all our visitors comment on. Seeing a smile on a child's face is priceless and our



Their smiles and happiness are the only rewards we need

greatest reward.

It would be foolish to think that we are successful with all the children. Some children come and stay with us only a short time and the temptations of the street gets the better of them and they return to their old ways.

A visitor once asked me: "How do you measure success with the street children?"

I told him that every single day that a child spends in our home is a WIN.

The care that he or she received with food, medical treatment, clothing and most of all love and attention is not wasted.

If the child leaves our home then they know that they will be welcome back; the Father Ray Children's Home or Children's Village is a home for life.

Later, their life may be totally changed because of the kindness they received during their time with us.

You and all our benefactors are co-workers with us. It is only through your unwavering support that we can accomplish our task and continue the mission started by Father Ray.

When we take visitors to our children's projects, they want to bring some sweets to our children. I do not deny them that pleasure, but I tell them that their presence is far more important than the candy they will offer to the children.

Visitors, and especially sponsors, make our children feel worthwhile. After having been denied the love that is needed for a normal childhood, for most of our children, they find peace and happiness from people that genuinely care about them.

If you have a chance to visit Thailand, please take some time to travel to Pattaya and meet our children. If you cannot visit, please keep them in your prayers and in your heart.



Our newest arrivals at the Father Ray Children's Village

Out of step, but lots of fun

Each year in late March or early April, a luxury cruise liner arrives in the port of Laem Chabang, a fifteen minute drive north of Pattaya, and each year our children are invited on board to entertain the guests.

This year it was the turn of the Queen Elizabeth to visit and selecting only one hundred and twenty five children was never going to be easy.

For the first time we took a group of children from the Drop-In Center, and four young ten year old boys were selected to perform a dance routine. For many days



They may not become professional dancers, but they had a great time trying

they rehearsed, and a crowd gathered at the Drop-In Center to witness their final dress rehearsal, two days before the actual performance would be taking place.

The music started and nothing happened, they had forgotten their opening moves, and their four minute dance routine actually lasted fifteen minutes as they could not stop laughing and not a single one of them was in step with each other.

But no one is perfect and they promised that they would be perfect on the day when they went on the ship and met Queen Elizabeth!

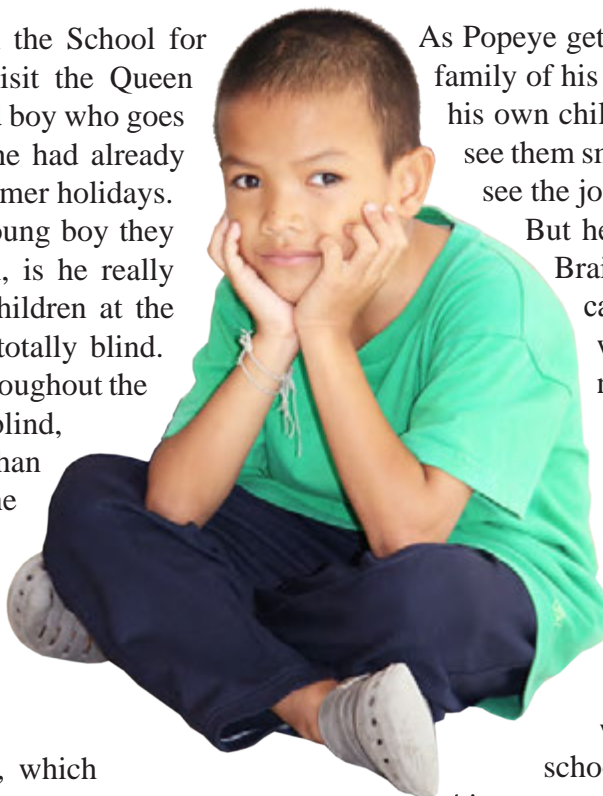
These four boys thought they were actually going to be meeting the real Queen Elizabeth, and they looked a bit disappointed when they were told it was a ship of the same name and Her Majesty would not be in the audience.

The day arrived and we all traveled to the port to board the ship. The children met the Captain before being served a lunch of pizza, French fries, cakes and too many glasses of cola. Once they were all well fed we all set off to the ship's theatre so the children could see where they would be performing. And that is when the nerves set in and even more so when the guests started to arrive, several hundred of them.

The show lasted one hour, with several traditional Thai and modern dance routines, an exhibition of Thai boxing, the blind children sang a selection of songs and the four boys from the Drop-In Center received cheers for their dance routine, even though none of them were in step with each other, but they had the most wonderful afternoon ever.

Popeye

One of the students from the School for the Blind who did not visit the Queen Elizabeth is a nine year old boy who goes by the name of Popeye, he had already returned home for the summer holidays. When people meet this young boy they all ask the same question, is he really blind? Well, not all the children at the School for the Blind are totally blind. In fact, of all the people throughout the world who are registered blind, or visually impaired, less than 15% are totally blind, the rest have different levels of visual impairment. Many of our children have some sight, but not enough to cope with attending a regular school. Popeye has tunnel vision, which for this little boy is like seeing the world through a small straw. Over time it is expected that his eyesight will deteriorate, and then he will be completely blind. It will be a very sad day when he wakes up and is unable to see anything. At the age of nine, and until he does lose his sight, he has been able to see the face of his own mother, can you imagine loving your mother, listening to her voice, but never having seen her face?



As Popeye gets older he may get married and start a family of his own, but he may never see the face of his own children and grandchildren; he will never see them smile, he will hear them laugh, but never see the joy on their faces.

But he will be able to read and write using Braille, he is also learning to use a white cane, which is difficult as he can see where he is going and he feels he does not need to use the cane, but we are preparing him for the day when he does need to use one.

As his classmates are eagerly listening to the teacher give them instructions on the correct way to use a white cane, Popeye can usually be found calling to the volunteers or to his friends in another class, and watching him as he walks around the school grounds waving his cane in the air, his eyes are anywhere but forward.

His favourite activity at school is when visitors arrive and he and his classmates are taken for a walk down to the nearby beach.

When we tell the children not to go into the water, just take a walk along the beach, Popeye pretends he never heard the teacher and he will run straight into the sea, fully clothed and with a huge smile on his face; he loves every minute.

The future is bright



Gik, our first nursing graduate

We recently asked every single resident at the Father Ray Children's Home, young and old, what they want to be when they grow up. From the younger children we have several future actresses, Oscar winning movie stars, supermodels, professional soccer players and future champion Thai boxers, both male and female.

The teenagers were a bit more down to earth with their ambitions, with most hoping to get good enough grades at school to go on to vocational college to learn a trade or to university to study for a degree.

But by far the most popular profession among our female residents, and a few of our young men, is nursing.

Nursing is still a highly respected profession here in Thailand, and the children have been influenced in their choice by one of our long term residents who has recently completed four years at a nursing college in Chiang Mai.

Gik, together with her twin sister Gook, have lived with us at the Home since arriving as fourteen year old in 2006, and while Gook still has one more year to go before graduation, Gik, at the age of twenty two, is ready to take her place in the nursing profession.

Not only will she be a great asset to the caring profession, she is also a good role model to our children, and she is the first of hopefully many of our children who will go on to have successful careers as nurses.

Whatever profession our children wish to join we will support them in every possible way, even if they do insist on becoming world champion boxers or Oscar winning Hollywood actresses!

Time to leave, but ready to go

In March we came to the end of another school year and we said farewell to a group of students from the Vocational School for People with Disabilities. Thirty four graduated, including eight who have spent the past two years learning English. These eight young adults, two male and six female, came from provinces all over the country, from Nong Bua Lamphu in the north east to Songkhla in the south and several in between. Most could speak no English before arriving in Pattaya, but now they are fluent and all have jobs to go to.

Most of the jobs for our graduating students were found through our Job Placement Agency, something most people don't know anything about.

Well, each year since 1999 the

is that we recently opened a call center to help and support people with disabilities. No matter where you are in the country, if you dial 1479 someone here in Pattaya will answer it. If you are living in the northeast and you are disabled, then we will help you. If you are a business owner in the far south and you are looking for staff, then you can call 1479 and we will introduce you to someone in your local area. Each year the JPA find employment for hundreds of people living with a disability, not just in Pattaya, but from all over the country.

Over the past two years our eight graduating students have become good friends, they have helped and supported each other, and they have laughed and cried together. But now they must say farewell, not only to

good thing is that we were taught by native English speakers”.

But while they were sad to be leaving, one student said there was one thing about the school no-one in the class would miss. At the start of each new term each class is assigned a chore which they must do everyday and, as one student said, “our job each morning was to clean the toilets. I never want to have to clean a toilet again, unless it's mine”.

Watchful eyes

The building work continues on the Father Ray Center for Children with Special Needs, and the workers are under close scrutiny from our teenage boys.

Our workers arrive before the sun rises and they work ten hours a day, seven days a week and each morning the boys who attend our current facility are out checking their work, passing comments and giving advice, whether it is wanted or not.

We are all eager for the day when the construction is complete, the rooms are furnished and ready for use, but until then our boys will be keeping a close eye on the progress.



Computer Business in English - Class of 2015

JPA helps hundreds of people with disabilities find work, not just those graduating from our school, but people with disabilities from all over the country. Something else most people won't know about

the school but to each other.

The eldest student in the class, a thirty three year old wheelchair user said that the school “gave us a chance to study, helped us to become more confident and the

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