



Fr. Ray Foundation Newsletter

June 2009

Spending Time With Our Family

Message from Fr. Larry

The last newsletter I sent to you "Feeding Our Family" asked for help to feed all of our children and many Newsletter readers responded positively to our appeal for which we send our thanks. I have given this newsletter the title of 'Spending time with Our Family'. By which I mean sharing your time and talents with the children and students we are taking care of and educating. These are the volunteers who give their time enthusiastically to help us with our work. They come from all over the world to spend time at the Father Ray Foundation. It is an exciting experience for volunteers, and for many a life-changing one. They all say they never forget.



Volunteer Teachers June 2009.

L-R Ben, Louise, Terry, Ian, Rungnapha, Liz, Pamela & Richard

Our Volunteers

Our volunteer helpers have always been an invaluable part of the Father Ray Foundation. We recently worked out that we have welcomed volunteers from more than thirty countries worldwide. Volunteers young and old have come with one reason in mind, to be part of the work of the Fr. Ray Foundation. From Europe, the Americas, Africa, Australasia and Asia volunteers of all ages have given their time for free to help others less fortunate than themselves. Many are young who take a break from their college studies, or who are between jobs. At the same time one volunteer was a grandmother from Canada who was well into her 80's when she arrived.

Long Term Volunteers

The first volunteer I want to introduce to you is a Thai woman, Ms SriUdom. She has been with us for sixteen years following a career that included working for Thai Airways Airline. The talent she shares with us is her ability to speak Thai, English and French. Add to that a very kind heart which is so evident in the relationships she strikes up with all the students with disabilities. During Advent season her little office fills up with small presents she wraps for each of the students for Christmas. At first she came to volunteer one day a week, this became two days a week until eventually she was volunteering full time. Read what she has to say about how volunteering has changed her life, "I got to know Father Ray and I realized that I wanted to help continue the work and contribute to help others. As long as I live I will continue helping his work'. Each new school year she meets individually with each student to interview and write their history which is invaluable in following the progress the student makes while they are with us and also to help find a sponsor for them. Ms SriUdom has attracted many of her friends from the Pattaya International Ladies Club to volunteer their time and good will to help write and update the case histories.



On arrival at our newly opened Welcome Center the first person visitors are likely to meet is one of our long time volunteers Audrey Williams. Her role is to greet visitors and make them feel at home, but she is much more than that. For over ten years Audrey has given her time and commitment to the work of the



Fr. Ray Foundation and she was a great friend to Father Ray in his final years. Audrey's daughter was a volunteer here with us, and so Audrey herself decided to leave the home comforts of England and see for herself the work being done here in Pattaya, and after that she decided to stay! Now Audrey spends much of the year here.

Ms Rungnapha is a young Thai lady who recently graduated with a Masters degree in Business English Communications. She regularly finds time to share her talents by teaching English to the students at our Vocational School for People with Disabilities. Knowledge of English and ability to speak it is essential for the students in their computer classes and later when they are looking for a job. We could never afford to hire teachers for this.

They come from all over the world...

The majority of our volunteers are from abroad. Some find out about us from our website. Many apply after hearing from friends who have volunteered and spoken of the wonderful experience. Ms Rosemary from Northern Ireland spent forty years in the teaching profession. When she retired she felt



Ms Rosemary with her students

that she wanted to 'give something back'. So she applied to become a volunteer with us. She said, "Although I had loved my career as a teacher right up to the day and hour I retired, I was not really interested in doing more of the same". However we persuaded her that her skills and knowledge could be put to good use at the Vocational School for People with Disabilities. "I soon realized that this 'venture' was not just about me. I had skills, which were needed at the Vocational School. So besides helping out in the other projects of the Foundation, teaching became a part of my retirement". When time for her to leave us came and we were saying our goodbyes and I thanked her for all she had done, I asked Rosemary "Do you think you will ever come back?" Her eyes teared

up with memories of her students and she said "You bet I will."

Rosemary's story is similar to many of the men and women who come to volunteer. When they come they wonder how they will fit in not knowing the Thai language or how they will be of help. But a profound change takes place in them after the months of sharing their talents and life with our children and students. They find it hard to leave, and want to return. As for us, I couldn't begin to place a price tag on the value of what they have shared with our Family.



Australian volunteer Alesia

From Down Under...

Each year we send 2 or 3 of our older children to study English in Australia, thanks to the support of Rotary Clubs of Pattaya and Australia, and the Pattaya International Ladies Club, and Thai Airways. Before they leave Thailand these students must have some knowledge of English and basic knowledge of life in a foreign land. What could be better than having Australian volunteers to teach them. Alesia and Ben not only taught them English. They also tried to prepare them for the culture and way of life that will be different from Thailand.

Teaching English to our blind students is especially difficult. The students speak very little English and most of our volunteers have a limited vocabulary of Thai words. Imagine holding up a book and telling



Ms Rungnapha with her students

the students 'This is a book' expecting them to know what you are trying to teach them. The volunteers need ingenuity and patience.

...To The U.K.

Every year Ms Joy from the UK comes to spend 3 weeks volunteering at our School for the Blind. She has a special reason to share her dedication and love with the students. Joy is partially sighted and has a lifetime of experience helping blind people. When she is with us she boards at the school with the students. I was very impressed watching Joy work with two of our blind students who are not only blind but also deaf. The use of the sense of touch was essential in order to communicate knowledge. Joy's hands working in the children's hands to feel physical objects like a banana. Then the hands forming the symbols of sign language, and the letters of the alphabet to spell the name of the object. So many talents shared with love.

Nora and Brian from Hartlepool in England and David from Scotland are regular volunteers who come for several weeks two or three times a year to spend time with our children. Brian is a builder by trade and in previous years has taken on several projects; he has built bathrooms at the Fr. Ray Drop-In Center and advised us on our drainage systems which have prevented the flooding of our buildings during the rainy season, saving us a small fortune in repair costs. Brian just performed a small miracle of changing a miserable slum shanty with a dirt floor, no doors, walls or protection from rain storms into a very livable cinder block house for the mother and her three children.



Louise from the UK at the Fr. Ray Day Care Center



Brian starts work on a slum dwelling

David and three of our volunteers go every day through the streets of Pattaya. They visit stores, restaurants, and places of entertainment to inform people about the Father Ray Foundation and to ask to place our donations boxes to help ensure continued support. Not everybody wants to do this task but our collecting boxes bring in substantial extra funds. We hope to have some fundraising professionals come to volunteer in the future to help us expand our fundraising capabilities.

And Everywhere in Between

Yoko is a Japanese volunteer who uses her talents as a physiotherapist at our Rehabilitation Center for Children with Special Needs. These are often children with Autism or Downs syndrome. She learned enough Thai language to communicate with the parents and explain the treatment needed for their child. For the first time in their lives



Yoko, right, with a student with disabilities

special children are receiving treatment and therapy that enables them to learn new skills. Basic activities like sitting up, walking, learning to use a spoon to eat, take time and patience to teach special needs children. Most importantly the parents learn from our volunteer how to care for their child that has special needs. The knowledge and techniques that the volunteer teaches them are invaluable for the parents to enable them to cope with difficult situations at home. For seriously disabled children even learning the basic skills we take for granted can be a major achievement.

Volunteers Give Their Time...

Billy, or as we nicknamed him, Cockney Bill, was a very close friend of Fr Ray and also a unique volunteer in his own way. He often visited the seedy parts of town and at great risk rescued children who were being abused.



Master of Ceremonies Cockney Bill

He heroically brought many children to the safety of the Fr Ray Foundation. Billy still helps us, raising awareness and organizing auctions to help raise much needed funds.



Dutch Sonya who used her skill to improve the diets of our children

Share Their Skills...

Sonya is the most recent of five volunteers from Holland who are studying nutrition. They volunteered to study the nutritional value of all foods available in Thailand and made recommendations to ensure that our children eat a balanced and nutritious diet.

To Help Our Children

There are so many more stories to tell about our volunteers that we just did not have the space to write about. Whether we have been able to tell you about them or not none of our volunteers would consider themselves a hero. These volunteers followed a mysterious call to help others and have shared their lives with less fortunate children. They asked for no pay. Their reward rather comes in the form of what I call, wholesomeness, or doing something worthwhile for those less fortunate. Nearly every one of them tells me before they leave that their stay with us has changed their lives. They will never forget it. They are a better person because of what they did here.

And we at the Fr Ray Foundation marvel at the array of talents they bring to benefit our children. They bring such a variety of talents but they all share a common trait, an intense desire to help others, especially children and babies who have been abandoned; a love for people with disabilities who with a little help from others can begin a new and productive life.



Jane from Denmark with a young friend at the Fr. Ray Children's Village

And How About You?

We are always delighted to hear from our friends who might want to join us for a while. We have lots to offer and need all sorts of skills, and not least people who are prepared to turn their hand to things they have not done before, because it is what we need right now. If you are interested in volunteering please contact volunteer@fr-ray.org

We know that not everyone can travel to Thailand and give their time but who would still like to support our work. You too can also help by sponsoring our children and students, making a donation and raising awareness of the work of the Fr. Ray Foundation.



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