

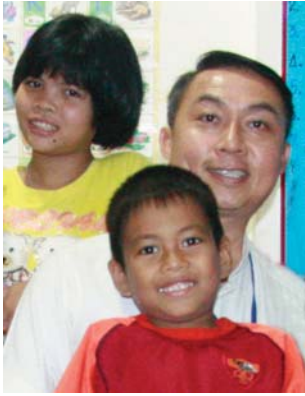


Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



August 2011

Message from Father Peter



As we are half way through the year I thought you may like to know what has been happening here in Pattaya over the past six months. But first, you may be wondering about the four hands symbol that we included on the previous newsletter and which is also on the front page of this current issue.

This is our new logo, one that will be easily recognizable and will make people think of Father Ray Foundation when they see it.

We thought long and hard before we decided on the four hands logo. You will see the hands are all different sizes, this shows that we help people of all ages; young toddlers, children, teenagers and young adults. The four colors denote the four corners of the Kingdom of Thailand from where people come to us for support. The hands also show that no matter the age, sex or the disability there will always be a welcome at the Father Ray Foundation, and we stand by our vision that 'we never turn a needy child away'.



Thank you for the positive responses we received following our last newsletter. The theme then was the health of our children, but in this newsletter we will give you the most recent news from Pattaya.

January - Farmer Daeng

January is our cool season here in Thailand. Some locals call it winter, and everyone wraps themselves in jumpers and coats, but we know it is nothing compared to the winters in Europe, the US and other parts of the world.

It was also the month that Farmer Daeng joined us. Adjoining the Father Ray Children's Village is a large piece of land that has become our agriculture farm. After a lifetime farming the land Farmer Daeng is an

expert, and we are very lucky to have him.

In just a matter of weeks since joining us the land was divided into plots, seeds were planted and with the help of the young residents of the Village the land is producing the most delicious foods; bananas, coconuts, cucumbers, aubergines, morning glory, beans, chilies, as well as many herbs and spices.



As soon as a crop is ready to be harvested he calls for help from the children. The following day our children and students at all our projects are enjoying fresh and healthy meals. Not only are we producing our own food, but also saving money in these difficult financial times.

February - Half Way House Opening



February saw the opening of the Half Way House, which is located on the same site as the Father Ray Drop-In Center. This new facility can accommodate up to six young men who are attending local colleges or working locally. They came to us for help, several had spent time living on the streets of Pattaya, and now they have returned to full time education or have good jobs and earning a decent salary. If they need help our workers are there for them, but they must learn to become independent, and when they are ready they will move out and stand on their own two feet.

Winning Cheerleaders

The annual sports day took place at the School for the Blind in early February. The students were split into two teams, blue and green, and every student was expected to participate in at least one competition. As usual the rivalry is fierce, and best friends become mortal enemies for the day, with everyone aiming to collect as many gold medals as possible.



This year there were prizes for the best cheerleading teams, and to say they were loud would be an understatement.

Wearing their brightest home made outfits, performing dance routines to perfection and singing their own songs the cheerleading competition was better than most sports competitions.

March - Graduation

As the school year came to an end in March, several students said farewell to their teachers at the Father Ray Day Care Center. After two years of learning to read and write they are now ready to enter local government schools. Many parents took time off from work to attend the ceremony. It was with pride that they watched their child being presented with their graduation certificates.



The Father Ray Day Care Center is the only project that charges a fee. Each day the children must pay five baht. This money does not cover the costs of running the Center, but we make this charge so that the family has to take some responsibility, they have to go out and find work to earn that five baht.

St. Patrick's Day

March also saw the Father Ray Foundation taking part in Pattaya's first ever St. Patrick's Day Parade. Children, students and volunteers from all our projects took part in the march along Beach Road. Our volunteers were given the job of decorating one of our trucks and they did a great job. Marching bands from nine local schools joined the parade which had the marchers and the on-lookers joining in the sing a long. Coming from an Irish American background I am sure that Father Ray would have loved it.



However, many children were confused as to why there were so many big fat foreign men all wearing green shirts, big hats and dancing in the street.

All Aboard

Towards the end of the month the luxury cruise liner 'Queen Elizabeth' paid a visit to Pattaya on its maiden voyage around the world. The captain invited one hundred and fifty children and students to climb aboard and entertain the guests. The children loved it, being on such a huge ship, and the crew treated



the children to a huge buffet full of cakes, sandwiches and cookies.

Our children performed a variety of different routines. The blind students sang, the students with disabilities performed a wheelchair dance and our boys gave an exhibition of Muay Thai boxing. The audience gave a standing ovation to each act, and for many guests it was their first time in Thailand, and the first time they had seen traditional Thai dancing which was performed beautifully by our young girls.

April - Songkran Festival

In the middle of the month we celebrated the Thai New Year festival of Songkran. What lasts for three days in most of the country lasts for nine days here in Pattaya, and it is the one holiday that our children look forward to the most.



For those of you who do not know about the traditional ceremony of Songkran, it is a time when young people pay respect to their elders. They pour scented water over the hands of their parents, grandparents, teachers, monks and priests, and in return they receive a blessing and good wishes for the New Year. Over many years the ceremony has turned into one huge water fight, and not long after the sun rises our children, several hundred in total, are all at our main gate, stopping traffic and throwing water and getting soaked in return.

Welcome Visitors

In April we welcomed a group of students and teachers from St. Paul's School Manchester in the UK. The boys at the Father Ray Children's Home were very excited when they heard that one of the students played in goal for the youth team at Manchester City. They could not believe that the goal-



keeper from such a famous team would be visiting and they were all dressed in their soccer kits ready and waiting. As the UK students arrived our boys were guessing which one was the goalkeeper, and they all had a look of disbelief on their faces when they discovered that the Manchester City goalkeeper was actually a female.

Before the planned soccer match started our boys gave a demonstration of Muay Thai boxing, and our visiting goalkeeper decided that she wanted to try out the national sport of Thailand.

One of our boys was given the task of being her opponent and he was a little embarrassed to be fighting a girl. He thought he would just play, and pretend to fight. That was until the young lady threw a punch and he was shocked at just how much power she had in her fist.

May - The New Ramp



The new term started at the vocational school for people with disabilities on the first Monday in May, and for the first time in many years there was not a mad rush for the small single elevator.

Building work on the brand new ramp was completed and it was ready to use.

Before the ramp many classes were cancelled if the elevator was out of service or if there was a power cut. Classes started late as all the wheelchair bound students waited in line. But now there is no excuse to be late for lessons, and even in a power shortage the students can still make it to their class on time.

Lost Socks

A few days after the vocational school opened all the local government schools reopened, which meant that the summer holidays were well and truly over.

By six thirty on the first morning of the new term all the residents at the Father Ray Children's Home had

eaten breakfast. The girls all looked very smart in their crisp white blouses and neatly pleated skirts. Their socks are whiter than white and their shoes are shining. They are all looking forward to meeting old friends and seeing what the new school year has to offer.

The boys on the other hand take life at a more leisurely pace. Slowly they emerged from the dining room, some still getting dressed and their teachers are all encouraging them to hurry as the school buses are waiting to leave.

But on the first day of the new term they were almost late leaving for school as one young boy could not find his socks. He told everyone that he has looked everywhere, 'how can you lose a brand new pair of socks' his teacher asks, 'we only gave them to you yesterday'. With a smile on his face and the jeers of his friends ringing in his ears he goes off to look once again but soon returns barefooted.

He is then handed another pair of socks, which in his haste to put on he almost tears a hole in them.

At last he was ready and everyone climbed on board the buses. It was seven o'clock when the bus actually left, and they made it on time.



But as the bus departed the older girls could be heard shouting at this young boy; we have no doubt that he will now take more care of his socks.

June - Horse Therapy

The beginning of June saw the commencement of horse therapy classes for the children with special needs. Each Tuesday and Thursday morning a small group of children and parents travel up to the stables of a nearby resort. Waiting for them on their arrival are the experienced staff from the organisation 'Riding for the Disabled'.



On seeing the horses the children become very excited. Over the previous months they have become very attached to their particular favourite, and their confidence has grown; no longer are they scared to get close.

When the children first started these riding sessions they were very nervous, many were unable to sit on the horse due mainly to poor posture and balance. Now they sit upright, are able to give orders to start and stop their horse and they can perform the tasks they are given by the volunteers from 'Riding for the Disabled'.

Thank You

I hope you have enjoyed reading our news from the past six months. Everything you have read is only possible because of you, our supporters.



I can not thank you enough for what you do for our children. I say our children because that is what they are; they are mine and they are yours, and together we are giving them the life they need and deserve.

Can you help?

We hope that you can continue to support our work here in Pattaya, and help us to give the best possible health care to our children and students.

If you would like to receive future newsletters via email, then please let us know by sending us a message to info@fr-ray.org

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