



Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



December 2011

Message from Father Peter



As we come towards the end of another year I would like to thank you for all your support.

This year we have welcomed many visitors to Pattaya, individuals who have for many years sponsored our children have arrived to meet their child for the very first time.

Groups of school, college and university from Thailand and around the world have given their time helping us with our work.

For our supporters from the United States I know you will be looking forward to Thanksgiving, while the rest of us are looking further towards Christmas. This is a very special time for most people, a time when families come together and with such a large family here in Pattaya we have to start preparing in the middle of the year. Our children and students have already started rehearsals for when they will visit the local hotels to sing Christmas carols.

Anything we can do, so can our blind students



At the School for the Blind not all our children are blind. There are many children who are visually impaired. They do not have a lot of sight, or enough for them to be able to attend a regular school alongside sighted children. But our blind and the visually impaired students love to try new experiences.

One Saturday afternoon a group of students from a photography college arrived at the school with a large bag of digital cameras, and taught the students how to take the perfect picture.

The working of each camera was explained to the students, and then once they understood which button to press they were taught how to take the photo.

It was amazing to watch the students. When a group of people had been chosen to be photographed, the student walked towards them, counted each person, and then stood in front of the person standing in the middle of the group. They then took a few steps backwards; for individuals and groups of two and three they took three steps. For large groups they took one step for every person posing.

When they counted the people being photographed they remembered how tall was the middle person and they asked the middle person to say something. The student then adjusted the camera at a certain angle, called One, Two, Three and click.

Although many could not see the photo they had taken, their instructor told them the result of what they had taken. If the angle was not right, a head was missing or the subjects were too far to the right or left they adjusted themselves and took the photo again.

On World Sight Day in early October we held a fashion show which saw several Thai supermodels taking to the catwalk alongside our blind students. Another group of students used their new skills and acted as official photographers for the day.



In 2012 the Pattaya School for the Blind will celebrate its 25th anniversary.

Almost 500 blind and visually impaired children have received an education. They have learned the skill and knowledge which will allow them to become worthwhile members of society.

If today's students are learning to take photographs, what new skills will the future students learn for the next 25 years.

Emergency Shelter

For many years the Drop-In Center has welcomed street kids and abandoned children, all of whom are looking for help of some sort. Many have gone to live at our Children's Home or Children's Village. Older ones have returned to education, graduated with a trade, found decent employment and are now earning a living for themselves. Recently though the Drop-In Center has become an emergency shelter for two vulnerable ladies.



One twenty-three year old lady arrived one evening carrying her new born baby. She asked if she could leave her baby with us as she had no money and she had no choice but to sell her body. Our workers persuaded her to move into the Drop-In Center and take care of her young child, and as the days went by she started to bond with her daughter. This young mother is now optimistic about her future. She would like to enroll at a local vocational school and train to become a cook, and make a home for herself and her little girl.

An elderly lady also came to the Drop-In Center for help. This lady is in the final stages of cancer, and she has no one to take care of her, no family, no friends and no money to pay for the care she needs.

We have made her comfortable, ensuring she is eating her meals and taking her medications on time.

When the younger children return to the Drop-In Center after school they pay her a visit. As they enter

her bedroom all the children place their hands together, bow their heads and perform a wai as a mark of respect. In return she asks them about their day, did they study hard, did they please their teachers and she always gives them a smile. We do not know how long this lady will be with us, but she is now part of our family, a grandmother to the children who have no grandmother of their own.

Millions affected by the flood waters

We are now coming to the end of the rainy season. Whilst Pattaya has seen its fair share of downpours, we are fortunate not to have experienced the flooding that many areas of Thailand have suffered.

One day in early September it rained non stop for twenty hours, and by the following morning half of Pattaya was under a meter of water. Houses were damaged, cars and motorbikes were abandoned and there was panic when the local crocodile farm announced that several man-eaters had escaped. Fortunately for us the water soon drained away, but many people in Thailand have not been so lucky.

The flooding which has affected many areas of the county has made headlines around the world and millions have been affected. Homes have been washed away, rice crops have been destroyed and several hundred people have tragically lost their lives.



As the water reached the outskirts of Bangkok, evacuation notices were given, but many people had nowhere to go.

News arrived to us of an orphanage in Bangkok which was about to be flooded, so we offered the fifty young children to stay at the Father Ray Children's Home. They arrived carrying what little belongings that had, looking scared and frightened. But after just a few hours we can not tell which children are ours and who is from Bangkok, everyone is getting along fine. The children are loving being in Pattaya. There is plenty of space to play, trees to climb and they are enjoying feeding the chickens and fish each day.

Fifty children with special needs have also arrived from the capital, all needing specialized care, and they will receive what they need. Another eighteen children have moved into the Father Ray Drop-In Center.

We also heard that many homes belonging to people with disabilities are at risk of flooding. Most people with disabilities live in single story houses, and their disability does not allow them to climb stairs to safety, so we have also welcomed them to come and stay at our vocational school.

No one knows how long it will take for the waters to subside. The orphanage in Bangkok is now under two meters of water and the army is working day and night building walls of sandbags to prevent further flooding.

All children will find a warm welcome at the Father Ray Foundation.

Holiday time ... but not for everyone

Throughout the month of October all schools, colleges and universities in Thailand are closed for the holidays. Here in Pattaya the blind students have departed for home as have the students from the vocational school, except one small group of students.

Students on the electronic repair course have spent three semesters, eighteen months, in a classroom learning how to diagnose a problem when an electrical appliance stops working. For their fourth semester they must do work experience.

Half the students are placed in local businesses, the remaining students work in the electronic workshop located at the vocational school.

Each student takes turn in being the manager, dealing with the general public, managing the workload of the workshop and using their new found skills and knowledge to ensure that each and every item left at the workshop is correctly and promptly repaired.

On their first day at the vocational school the majority of students could not change a socket on an appliance. One and a half years later they are able to repair all household appliances, manage a business, deal with the general public, Thai and foreign, and pass on their knowledge to others.

A smile is a beautiful thing

The past year has seen huge changes in the lives of many of our children and students. While the majority of our children are getting on with their lives, others are new to the Father Ray Foundation and still getting used to us. It saddens us all when we hear the stories of some of our children. A three year old boy who was



living with his grandmother arrived last August after he witnessed the killing of his grandmother by his father. Children come to us thinking that the abuse, neglect and poverty they have experienced in their short life is normal.

If all they have ever known is poverty, then poverty is normal for them. If a child has spent their whole life being abused, physically, sexually or emotionally, then they will believe that abuse is a normal part of life.

But when they arrive at our Children's Home, Children's Village or the Drop-In Center they soon understand that a life free from abuse is normal.

It is heartbreaking to see the sadness on the face of a young child, but show a child they are safe, let them know that they will not be beaten, show them you care and you will be rewarded with the most beautiful smile. Not only do we give the children a home, an education and medical help, with your help we also give them back their childhood.





Update

In April's newsletter I told you about a young lady who is currently studying at the Vocational School for People with Disabilities.

Born with a large tumour on her face this brave young lady has not let her disability hold her back, and she is currently half way through her Information Systems course.

In July she visited a hospital in Bangkok for an MRI scan, and

results have shown that there are no major arteries in the area of the tumour. Therefore later this year she will travel once again to Bangkok where her medical team will attempt to remove as much of the tumour as possible. How much of the tumour they will remove we do not know, but we are all praying for her and we wish her the best of luck.

Can you help? Our Annual Appeal

As we near Thanksgiving and Christmas I would like to ask for your help. I know that many people around the world are having financial problems. Many people have lost their jobs and their homes, and are in desperate need of help, but I ask you not to forget our children at this time of year.

Times are just as hard here in Thailand. The cost of food keeps rising and we are doing all we possibly can to save money. Our farm is producing fresh fruit and vegetables, and much cheaper than at the local markets. Next year we hope to increase the size of the farm, build a chicken farm and also raise the number of fish tanks.

The price of pork has gone up in price, almost 50% in the past six months, and at the Vocational School we have had to reduce the amount of meat we feed to our

students. Fortunately fish has remained at a low price, so everyone is still receiving enough protein.

Due to the recent flooding in many parts of Thailand rice has also gone up in price, but this is one staple food that we can not cut down on. We eat rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and our children think that no meal is complete without a plate of freshly cooked rice.

Last year our SOS Rice campaign saw the people of Pattaya donate 13,000 kilos of rice, enough to feed our children for two months and we hope to raise more when this campaign takes place again in early December.

For this year's Annual Appeal we are asking you to buy a meal for our children. We ask that you select which project you would like to buy lunch or dinner for. It could be the blind students, the young adults with disabilities or the residents from the Children's Home or Children's Village. You may wish to buy lunch for the toddlers at the Father Ray Day Care Center; this is usually the only hot nutritious meal they will eat all day.

The cost of each meal per child is 20 baht, and the total amount of each meal depends on how many children or students are at each particular project.

I know our children and students all look forward to having a special meal.

I hope that each and everyone of you is blessed this Christmas with joy and happiness.

Father Ray Foundation

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we never turn a needy child away