

# Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



June 2013

*My goal is not to change the world  
I can only teach the children enough to hold their heads high*

*Father Ray*

## From street kid to teacher at the Father Ray Children's Home



August 1999



Today

If I am a teacher today it is thanks to you.

My name is James and I first came to live at the Father Ray Children's Home in 1999, when I was thirteen years of age. Like many children who arrive at the Home my family were poor. My mother worked hard, but she was unable to earn enough to provide my sister and me with what we needed. Also, I did not have proper documentation which meant I could not attend school, but I wanted to.

My mother sent me to live with an uncle in Pattaya, who was then advised that I would be better off living at the Children's Home.

When I first came to live here I was scared, but soon realized that there was nothing to be scared about. The teachers were here to help us and the other boys took care of me, showing me around and telling me where everything was.



With the help of the social worker at the Home I was enrolled into a local school. I knew a good education would give me a better life. My mother often told me that I would have to work hard, so I did and although sometimes I felt like giving up I had a lot of support from the teachers at the Home.

In 2005 my mother died and as her only son it was my duty to spend some time

living as a Buddhist monk. As I sat in front of the Abbot waiting to take my vows, all the other boys from the Home sat beside me taking their vows; it was their way of giving me support.

Five years later, and thanks to the people who support Father Ray's work, I graduated from Sri Pathum University with a bachelor's degree in Industrial Management. As I stood waiting to receive my graduation certificate I knew my mother would have been proud of me.

Today I work at the Children's Home as a teacher and I am responsible for taking care of a group of young boys. Our relationship is not always one of teacher and student; I am more like their elder brother.

When we welcome a new arrival I can see how worried and nervous they are. I know how they feel as I know what life they have led before coming to the Home; I know where they have come from.

I want to make sure these boys do well in their studies and have a good life. When I talk with them and encourage them to study hard they listen as they also know where I came from.

When I graduated from university in 2010 I was the first ever resident



from the Children's Home to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Today there are many children studying at vocational schools, colleges and universities all over the country, but without the Father Ray Children's Home none of us would have had this opportunity.

I sometimes wonder where I would be and what I would be doing if I never came to live at the Children's Home. But as I tell my children here, there is no point in thinking about what may have been. I came here, I worked hard and I have a happy life. Now I want the same for all the children living here.

## New friends, a new job, a new life



Every Saturday evening there is a large convoy of wheelchairs making its way along the road behind our main complex here in Pattaya. All young women, dressed in their finest clothes and, like young women all over the world, they are off for a night out at a local restaurant or an evening of karaoke.

All these young ladies are former students from the vocational school, and while they came from provinces throughout the country they have now made Pattaya their home.

The two years they spent at the vocational school not only gave them new skills but it also changed their outlook on life.

They no longer want to be sitting at home all day doing nothing and they no longer want to be treated differently than any other person of the same age.

They work in local shops, hotels and foreign owned businesses. Many are employed in the call centers that have been set up by the large national companies and while they may be away from their families they are enjoying their new life in Pattaya.

Telecommunications giant AIS, electrical appliance superstore Powerbuy and Chevrolet Thailand have set up call centers where all employees are former students from our vocational school.

These companies have discovered the benefits of employing students from the Vocational School for People with Disabilities. Their computer knowledge, language skills and

ability to work hard has shown that people living with a disability can do just as well as anyone.

In July this year a new call center will open. The number will be 1479 and this service is available free to offer advice and support to people with disabilities all over Thailand.

This new service will provide callers with advice on finding suitable employment, counseling, legal advice on the rights of people with disabilities and it will also advise companies on the law when employing people with disabilities.

The number 1479 comes from the number of kilometers traveled across the Kingdom by a group of students in wheelchairs in 2012.

Once again this new call center will be staffed by former students from the vocational school and the convoy of wheelchairs on a Saturday evening may become a little bit longer.

## School for Blind Children

Like the majority of schools in Thailand, the Pattaya Redemptorist School for Blind Children only teaches up to Grade 9. After this, if students wish to continue their education they must enroll at another school or enter vocational training, and for a blind student the choice is very limited.

It was in March 2011 that a young student by the name of Bear decided that he wanted to continue his studies in Grades 10-12 at a local government school. This had never been done before, no blind student had ever asked to enter a regular school and the local school had never had such a request.

After several meetings it was decided that Bear could join a class of 40 sighted students and continue his education for three years.

He continued to live at the School for the Blind, but each day he at-

tended his new school, taking the two kilometer walk each morning using his white cane as a guide. He would listen to the lessons, recording the teacher on a small tape recorder and then write his notes, in Braille, once he returned home in the evening.

After graduating top of his class he applied to, and was accepted as a student at the Faculty of Law at Thammasat University to fulfill his dreams of becoming a lawyer.



In April this year he returned to Pattaya to attend the opening ceremony of the brand new vocational school for the blind.

His former teachers were very pleased to see him, so too were the current students who sat and listened to his words of advice and encouragement.

Since graduating with his law degree he is earning a good salary, is respected by his peers and enjoying life, and before he said his farewells he said that he has never forgotten what the school in Pattaya did for him.

With the new vocational school now open all the blind students will have the opportunity to complete twelve years of education as well as learn new skills that will give them an even better chance of finding a good job.

## Not everyone has the chance to go to school – yet

Father Ray once said that *‘anyone can construct a building, it is what you do with the building that matters’*. We can provide our children with enough rice to eat and a roof over their heads, but we believe an education is one of the most important things we can give to a child.

However there are many children living in the Pattaya area who are unable to attend school. Not because they are too young or too old, but because they are seen as being different to other children. These are children who are classified as having special needs. These children have different abilities and requirements and while local schools refuse to accept these children, they are welcome at the Father Ray Foundation.

We currently have more than eighty children, from the age of two upwards, who come to us for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, counseling and support, but most of all they come to us to be educated.

These children need to be educated. If we do not provide them with what they need no one else will. However, our main problem is a lack of space which means that eighty children can not all attend at the same time, usually just one or two sessions a week. What they really need is to be able to come to us every day. The more time they are with us the more they will learn.



## Update

We are often asked by many readers of our newsletters about a little boy whose story has featured regularly over the years.

This little boy came to us when he was just three years of age following a horrific episode of abuse when he was thrown on a bonfire for making too much noise.

That little boy, who goes by the name of Condo, is now nine years of age, or ‘nearly ten’ as he likes to tell everyone.

He continues to live at the Father Ray Children’s Village and is now living a normal and happy life.

During the long summer holidays in April, Condo, along with fifteen other boys from the Village, joined well over one hundred local boys who were ordained as Buddhist monks at a nearby temple.

To say Condo was happy would be an under statement, a smile never left his face.

When he was having his head and eyebrows shaved he was smiling. When he was trying to work out how to wear the long saffron coloured robes or saying his vows and chanting his prayers he did so with a smile on his face. Even when he vowed to follow the rules of the temple, including not to eat after twelve o’clock lunch time, he did so with a smile on his face.

On that day at the temple when Condo, along with all the other boys, was being helped into his robes he was following a tradition whereby the majority of Thai men and boys will spend some time during their life living as a Buddhist monk.

After four weeks at the temple the boys returned home to the Children’s Village. When the new school year started in early May Condo moved up to a higher class and we all know that whatever happened to him all those years ago he is now a happy and normal nine year old, who is ‘nearly ten’.

## Can you help Em?

Our latest appeal is to raise funds to ensure one of our boys from the Father Ray Children's Home can continue his education at vocational school.

Em is nineteen years of age and came to live at the Father Ray Children's Home for the same reason as James. Following the divorce of his parents, he, together with his younger brother, lived with their father. However being a casual worker meant there was never enough money to feed his sons.

Em was eleven years of age when he arrived at the Home and shortly after it was noticed that his grades were low, his teachers at school complained that he was unable to understand the work that he was set and he never participated in any class activities.

Like all children at the Home Em receives regular health check ups and it was here that the doctor discovered Em had a problem with his hearing. Em knew all along that something was wrong with his hearing, but being a young boy he was too embarrassed to say anything. The hearing specialist provided Em with a hearing aid and we were all surprised at how his grades increased every time he took his end of term exams.



### We need your help to ensure Em can continue his education.

The cost of one year tuition, or forty weeks not counting holidays, is 60,000 Baht, that is 1500 Baht (£33 €40 US\$52) each week.

What we are asking is for you to make a donation that will cover the cost of Em's education for one week.

This donation will cover the cost of the tuition, transport, meals, uniforms, books and materials.

Three years ago James was the first resident from the Father Ray Children's Home to graduate from university with a bachelor's degree. As each year passes the number of children wanting to continue their education increases.

Can you help Em fulfill his dreams, reach his full potential and join the workforce as an educated young man?

Following Grade 9 Em enrolled at the nearby Banglamung Vocational School to complete his final three years of schooling.

He successfully graduated in March this year, and now his wish is to continue his education at college. Due to his hearing problems he will enroll on a course specially designed for people with hearing difficulties.

He wants to study electronics, to gain the knowledge and skills that will ensure he is not just employable but that he can earn a salary that will allow him to take care of his father and younger brother.

### And finally

Up at the Children's Home our girls received an invitation to participate in an 'Aerobics Dance Competition'. The only problem was the invitation arrived less than twenty four hours before the competition was due to start.

They worked out a few dance routines and the next morning off they went to the competition.

Watching the other dance troupes as they performed acrobatics and routines which saw no one out of step our girls became very nervous.

But there was no turning back and onto the stage our girls climbed. The announcer informed the large audience that our girls had not had much time to rehearse, then the music started and the girls started their routine.



As the seconds passed into minutes the cheers from the crowd got louder and as the crowd got louder smiles appeared on the faces of the dancers as their confidence grew.

By the time they finished the crowd were on their feet giving a standing ovation and no one was more surprised than our girls when the judges announced they were to receive a special award for their performance. Well done girls.

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