

Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



March 2015

Father Ray Children's Home 25th Anniversary

This year, 2015, the Father Ray Children's Home will celebrate its 25th anniversary. By 1990 Father Ray had already opened an orphanage, a school for blind children, a school for deaf children, a home for stateless old people and a vocational school for young adults with disabilities. But as Pattaya increased in size from a small fishing village into the large cosmopolitan city that it is today, so did the number of children who made their way to Pattaya from all over the Kingdom. They were running away from poverty and abuse. They had been neglected or abandoned by their families and they came to Pattaya with the hope of making a better life for themselves.

Here in Pattaya the situation of the street kids is not too good. We estimate there are about four hundred of them. Some have run away from home, some have been kicked out of their home by relatives and don't know what it is to have a bed and clean clothes. I started this project with much trepidation, but also with confidence that we can do something for them.

Father Ray – January 1991

But for most the reality was a life of living on the streets and begging or stealing to make enough money to buy a meal. Some joined criminal gangs while others, male and female, prostituted themselves to earn money. Many were at risk of contracting HIV, others were physically and sexually abused and there

were those who went to sleep every night with hunger pains.

Most Pattaya residents, Thai and foreign, looked down on these children, saw them as a nuisance and a pest. No one was willing to help them, except one man, Father Ray.

It was in 1990 that Father Ray opened the doors of what was then known as the Home for Street Kids. Several years later the Home for Street Kids relocated to East Pattaya, changed its name to the Father Ray Children's Home and today there are one hundred and forty children who call it home; the youngest resident is seven while the eldest is twenty four. Over the past quarter of a century, more than six hundred children have arrived seeking help.



A good role model

For the past seven years Mrs. Sasithorn, or Pom as she is known, has been manager at the Home, becoming a mother to all the children. But she is not only a mother to the children. She is a comforter when they are sick, a



cheerleader when they are competing, an advisor when they have problems, a supporter of their decisions and a disciplinarian when anyone misbehaves.

In 2014 Pom received an award from His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Thailand for her work in child care, but more extraordinary is that also in 2014 she graduated from High School.

As a young girl she had to leave school early to earn money for her family. And she worked hard, but always

hoped that she would one day finish her education and receive her final school certificate.

Later this year Pom will enroll at university where she will study Business Management. Due to her very busy workload at the Children's Home, she will spend her one day off each week, Sunday, attending classes. Could the children ask for a better role model?



The work with the street kids is the 'smallest' project I have, ...but it is the most difficult

Father Ray – Christmas 1992

Staff



There is an old African proverb that says it takes a village to raise a child. But at the Children's Home it takes an army of workers to take care of all our children.

There is a social worker to help the children with their problems, drivers to take them to school, teachers who care for them, nurses to make sure they remain fit and healthy, a farmer who looks after the animals and vegetables, a gardener who keeps the grounds looking neat and tidy, an administrator, several cooks who make sure

the children have the delicious and nutritious meals they need and a maintenance man who seems to spend a lot of time replacing broken windows; of course, no one ever admits to kicking the football through the window. Many of the workers have been with us for many years and they stay, not for the high salary and benefits, but because they care for the children; for our staff, working at the Father Ray Children's Home is more than just a job, it is a vocation.

we never turn a needy child away

Education is everything



In 2010 the first three residents from the Children's Home graduated from university, followed in 2014 by our fourth resident who graduated with a degree in Law. Today, as you read this newsletter, eleven of our young men and women from the Home are studying at university campuses throughout the Kingdom; the average cost for each student is 150,000 Baht (US\$5000).

Twin sisters are studying at Schools of Nursing, one in the nearby province of Chonburi, the other in Chiang Mai in the north of the country.

Others are studying Business Management, English, Computer Science, Tourism and Aviation Industry, Physical Education and Sports Science.

There are a further seven attending local vocational schools and colleges and studying Computer Technology, Mechanics and Agriculture. Next year even more of our children will be attending college and university, thanks to you.

You may be asking yourself, what is so special about our children going to university, after all, children all over the world are studying for a degree. Well, for every single one of our residents who has been, or is currently studying at a university, they are the very first person from their own families to do so. In fact, most of their parents never even completed primary school.

We're getting there

Since the Home for Street Kids moved to its present location and became the Father Ray Children's Home, the children have always used any available land to grow fruit and vegetables. While the Home may never become 100% self-sufficient, today there are several hundred chickens providing thousands of eggs each month. The pigs are bred for sale when they are large enough, the ducks lay eggs, which are either eaten or incubated to raise more birds and mushroom huts are producing so many mushrooms the children sell them

at the local market.

In early 2014 we planted more than one hundred lime trees that we hope will soon start to produce fruit we can harvest. Limes are used a lot in Thai cooking, and they are also become very expensive to buy.

Growing fruit and vegetables are skills the children learn at the Father Ray Children's Home. From the rice field, the vegetable patches and the orchard of lime trees the children take responsibility for the care, and all are grown without the use of pesticides, making them 100% organic

25th Anniversary Celebration May 9th & 10th 2015

We have come a long way over the past twenty five years. We have changed the lives of many, but we could not have done it alone. It is you, our friends and supporters, who have believed in what we are doing here in Pattaya. You have had the confidence in us and you have allowed us to provide our children with the life they deserve.

We like to think of ourselves as one big family. But our family is not just the children and our workers at the Home here in Pattaya, our family has members all over the world, many who may never get the chance to visit. You, our friends and supporters, are part of our family. You have shown us that you care for our children, and you want our children to have the best life possible, so we would like to invite you to join in the celebrations for the 25th Anniversary which will be taking place later this year on the weekend of the 9th & 10th of May here in Pattaya. Thank you for your support



Newest arrivals

A few weeks before Christmas we welcomed our newest arrivals to the Children's Home. The father of these thirteen year old twin brothers has been missing since they were born, their mother is in Malaysia earning money to pay off a debt and the boys had been left with neighbours, but mostly taking care of themselves and not attending school.

Arriving at the Home they were very nervous, but all our children know what it is like to be the new kid on the block, and within a short time they felt right at home.

Not only did they have a new home, but they also celebrated Christmas for the very first time. They knew who Santa Claus was, but being Thai Buddhists they knew nothing about Christmas.



On Christmas Day the brothers joined the other children at a local restaurant for a special Christmas lunch. Can you believe that it was the first time they have ever eaten in a restaurant? Not only did they enjoy a delicious seafood lunch but they also received several gifts.



We don't know how long the boys will stay with us, but for now they have a home, they have made new friends, they go off to school each day, have enough to eat and by the smiles on their faces we know they are happy.

The street kids give all kinds of reasons why they ran away from home. But the real reason they ran away was because they felt they were not loved. Love is so important in raising a kid. It gives the child security and a feeling of belonging.

Father Ray – Summer 1994

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Longest resident

Pop was eight years of age when she arrived at the Children's Home in November 2000. For the past fourteen years the Children's Home has been her home, and she is our longest ever resident.

After completing nine years of schooling, Pop enrolled at a local vocational school where she completed her final three years education while majoring in Accounting. It was a happy day for everyone when she graduated.

Today, at the age of twenty two, she is in her first year at Rajamangala University where she is studying for a degree in Business Administration.

