



# Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



March 2012

## Message from Father Peter



I hope it is not too late to wish you all the best for this year. As we do enter a new year I also hope that you had a wonderful time at Christmas. When I was a young boy, celebrating Christmas was almost unheard of here in Thailand. As a Christian I joined in the festivities with my family but most Thai people are Buddhist so it was just a normal day for them. However, in recent times Christmas has become one of the biggest holidays of the year. Everywhere you travel there are Christmas trees, lights are flickering, restaurants and shops are playing Christmas carols and young children are wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## A Chinese banquet, Santa Claus and the Village People

Last Christmas we decided that, rather than each project holding their own parties, we would have one large party. More than eight hundred children and students, workers and volunteers gathered together for a party that I don't think anyone will ever forget.

Tables were set up and the children enjoyed a Chinese banquet. Eight courses of food were served, including fried rice, spicy prawn soup, fried fish, roast duck, stir-fried vegetables, sweet sticky rice and fresh fruit.

It is amazing just how quiet so many children became when the food was served, and there was not a single grain of rice that was wasted.



The theme for the party was 1970's Disco, and the highlight of the show was the performance by the foreign volunteers who danced on stage to a medley of songs from that era. The finale saw the audience joining in the final dance routine to the Village People's Y.M.C.A.



As the music faded the sound of bells could be heard, which signaled the arrival of Santa Claus.

For some of the younger children it was the first time they had ever seen a man with a big beard, wearing a red suit and shouting 'Ho Ho Ho'. While many ran to greet Santa, others ran for cover, hiding under the tables, but they soon emerged as he proceeded to hand candy to everyone.



## Father's Day

The biggest holiday for us here in Thailand is on December 5th when we celebrate the birthday of our beloved King.

As we see the King as the father of the nation, so it is on this day that we also celebrate Father's Day.

On that day I spent the morning at the School for the Blind and I noticed that many fathers of our blind students travelled to Pattaya to visit their children.



All those fathers who were able to attend were invited to receive a flower from their own child. It was a touching moment to watch as the children knelt in front of their father, presented a flower and then bowed low as a mark of respect to their father. In return they all received a big hug.

Many fathers were unable to attend, so mothers, big sisters and grandmothers attended in their place.

As I sat watching the ceremony, I noticed the late arrival of an elderly lady, the grandmother of one of our teenage boys.

She arrived wearing clothes that had seen better days. Her teeth were stained red from eating too much betel nuts and her skin was tough, wrinkled and dark from many years working in the

fields. She had taken care of her blind grandson since his birth, and she wanted to be part of the day's ceremony.

Being a teenager, who towers over his little grandmother, this young man was a little embarrassed when this elderly lady tried to give him a hug. He hesitated at first, but once he felt her arms around him he threw his arms around this little old lady and almost squeezed the life out of her. Last I saw of them they were walking down the road holding hands, off home for a few days holiday from study. While this young man is lucky to have such a loving grandmother to care for him, many of our children are not so lucky.

## Looking ahead

Like parents and guardians all over the world we would like to see all our children go off to study at university and graduate with a degree, but we know that this is not possible for everyone. It was in 2010 that the first three residents from the Children's Home graduated from university, and today we have another eight young people studying at university and seventeen studying at college.

For those youngsters who do not have the capacity to study to such a high level we have plans for each individual child. There is no point in forcing anyone to study and insisting they go to university when in reality there is not a chance they will make it. We will help these youngsters to find work that is suitable for



them and ensure that they are able to lead a decent life, never returning to the life they lived before arriving at the Foundation.

## Success stories

One young man arrived at to our Drop-In Center in 2008. His parents had passed away and his aunt, who became his legal guardian, had sold the land that was left to him, spent the money and then placed him in a juvenile detention center. A shy young man, he was interested in cooking so we found a place for him at catering college and once he graduated he found a job at one of Pattaya's top hotels.



He was recently presented with an award from the Ministry of Social Welfare in recognition of his hard work and the good influence he has on others.



All we can do is provide each child with access to an education, and give them the support and encouragement they need to reach their full potential.

All our children and students will eventually leave us and we can only hope that they will have the skills, knowledge and enough education that will bring them happiness in their lives.



At the recent graduation ceremony I presented certificates to more than sixty graduating students from the Vocational School for People with Disabilities. As I passed a certificate to one young lady I recalled reading her story when she first arrived here in Pattaya.



She had not had much education, she could barely read and write, and what she did know she had been taught by her younger sister. But at the age of thirty three this young lady wanted to learn. She wanted to do something with her life, improve her chances of getting a

decent job and so she came to us hoping that we could help her fulfil her dreams.

In two years she has studied Math, Thai Reading & Writing, English, Computer Science and Office Management & Accounting, and as she graduates she has a job to go to.

She is now working at a call center for Thailand's largest telecommunications company, dealing with complaints and trying to sort our problems and make life more simple for her clients.

Eight of our former students from the Vocational School for People with Disabilities recently started work at Krungthai AXA Life, one of the worlds largest life insurance company. They have been employed not because they are disabled, nor so that the company can be seen to be doing the right thing or filling quotas, but because they are qualified for the job. They now sit amongst able bodied workers where they are not treated any different

than the person sitting next to them, and this is exactly the way they want it to be. If our students go for a job interview and they are not successful they hope it is because they are not good enough, and not because they are sitting in a wheelchair.



## The price of rice is going up

All 250 evacuees from the recent floods in Bangkok and neighbouring provinces have now left us and returned to their homes.

But as they return home and clean the mess and damage caused by the flooding, the whole country is still suffering.

Twenty six of the seventy seven provinces in Thailand were flooded, destroying an estimated six million tons of rice, and this can only mean one thing; the price of rice has started to increase.

During the floods local shops and markets ran out of rice, or limited the amount that was sold to each family.

Our annual SOS Rice Appeal in December raised far less rice than the previous year, even though our appeal lasted three weeks instead of the usual one weekend.



We purchase rice in large 49kg bags and we need thirty bags per week. Each 49kg bag costs us the equivalent of 23.7 baht per kilo, much lower than in the shops. We need your help to allow us to purchase as much rice as possible before the price becomes too high.

## What a beauty!

We have a little girl who attends the Father Ray Day Care Center, and no matter how much fun the children are having she never smiles. She was born with what could be called a 'lazy eye'. Her right eye always seems to be half closed and she is cross eyed.

We have noticed that she does not like having her photograph taken, and she will not look at herself in the mirror. New children and visitors at the Day Care Center do stare and point, and she has become very self-conscious of the way she looks.

Just before Christmas we sent her to see the optician at a hospital in Bangkok and within days she was booked in for surgery, and we are very pleased that it has made a huge difference to her life.

Whenever she passes a mirror she will take a glance of herself, and now no one is pointing and staring at her. But best of all she is learning to smile.

## Do children remember their past?

As we enter a new year we know that during the next twelve



He lived with his mother before she decided that he would be better off living with his grandmother. All was well until his father tried to reclaim Chai

months we will welcome many children who have led miserable lives. Poverty, abuse, neglect and abandonment by their parents means that they do not have much to smile about. Although we can not become their parents, no one can replace a mother's love, what we can do for them is give them the next best thing and get them to think about their future rather than their past. Once they can do this, and be positive, then they are on the first step to improving their lives.

I often wonder just how much our children remember about their lives before they came to live with us.

There is a little boy, who I shall call Chai, living at the Children's Village, who came to us when he was just three years of age.

back, but in the process of trying to take his son from his grandmother an argument led to a fight and the father ended up killing the old lady. Unfortunately Chai witnessed the whole terrible scene, and I hope and pray for his sake that he does not remember this terrible event. I also hope it is true when people say that it is only us adults who live in the past, and children live in the present.

On the recent Children's Day holiday we took all the children from the Village to the local Tiger Zoo. Unlike many of the children Chai was brave enough to climb into a cage and feed milk to a tiger cub while it was sitting on his lap. 'Can I take him home?' Chai asked, and the shouts of 'No' came from almost every other child and mother. He was sad to say farewell to his new friend, but his face lit up when we visited the gift shop and handed him a cuddly toy tiger which now has pride of place on his pillow.

## Father Ray Foundation

440 Moo 9, Sukhumvit Road,  
Km 145, Nongprue, Banglamung,  
Chonburi 20260, Thailand  
Tel : +66-38-716628 , 428717  
Fax : +66-38-716629

**info@fr-ray.org** **www.fr-ray.org**  
Bank Account: Bangkok Bank Ltd.  
1. Banglamung Chonburi Branch  
Current Account: 342-3-04125-4  
2. Seacon Square Bangkok Branch  
Current Account: 232-3-02275-2

