



# Father Ray Foundation Newsletter



June 2012

## Message from Father Peter



In this newsletter, and future newsletters, we thought you may like to hear from some of the people who are working closely with our children and students. We start with Khun Pom, manager of the Children's Home, and mother to more than 150 vulnerable children who are being helped to rebuild their lives.

## Message from Khun Pom *Manager of the Father Ray Children's Home*

April is always a busy time for our staff at the Father Ray Children's Home as we prepare for the new school year which starts in early May.

This school year we will have five students attend university, while another eight are studying at college or vocational school. This makes me very proud because those children never thought they would have a good education, and soon they will have a university degree.

Eight children with special needs travel to a nearby boarding school, and the remaining children, more than one hundred and twenty, attend eighteen different schools in the local area.

Buying uniforms for everyone takes a lot of planning. Each child needs a regular school uniform (which really means 2 for each child), a sports uniform and a Scout uniform. The name of the school, as well as the name of the student and class, must be embroidered on each shirt or blouse and that is a lot of work.

Then there are all the school and sport shoes that must be bought. When I walk into a store, I am welcomed with a big smile from the shop owner as he knows I will buy more than one hundred pairs of all different sizes.

Our children are growing so fast that I usually have to buy them a bigger sized shirt, blouse, pair of trousers or shoes half way through the school year, and thanks to our supporters we are able to give our children what they need.

I would like to thank all the people who help my children.

You support makes such a difference and it is helping scared and frightened youngsters grow into confident, well educated and decent young adults. Without your support I can not imagine what the lives of our children would be like, thank you.

## Update

In the previous newsletter we asked for your help to buy rice, and once again you surprised us with your generosity. During the floods that affected much of the country at the end of last year we here in Pattaya welcomed many refugees from Bangkok; children and people with disabilities who were in need of shelter and food. Crops were ruined, many stores and supermarkets had empty shelves, the price of rice went up and our supplies were running low.

Thanks to you our rice storage is now looking healthier, thank you very much.





## The holidays are here

The month of April means that all schools, colleges and universities close for the long summer holidays. For seven weeks the children are allowed to rest, spend time with friends, attend summer camp, play sports and enjoy Songkran, the Thai New Year festivities.

Of all the holidays that are celebrated in Thailand, Songkran is the one that brings everyone together. Young and old, rich and poor, male and female, everyone enjoys Songkran.

It is a time to visit the temple and honor the Buddhist statues by pouring water mixed with Thai fragrances. To pay respects to their elders, our children poured water over the hands of

their teachers, wishing everyone a Happy New Year.

But the most fun is had when the children go onto the streets to throw water over cars passing by. Pattaya turns into one huge water fight, and there is no stopping our children, they will throw water from dawn to dusk.

## Taking vows

Ten young boys from the Children's Village followed a tradition that the majority of Thai boys and men participate in, they were ordained as Buddhist monks.

Arriving at the temple early one morning, the first task was for the boys to be cleansed. They were washed, then heads and eyebrows were shaved and each boy was given a white robe that shows he is a novice.

Following the ordination ceremony each boy was handed his orange robes, which they soon realised were not as easy to put on as they thought.

While at the temple, the boys had to follow many different rules. There was no eating after noon, no watching TV, no handling money, they had to sleep on the floor and they learned about the life of the Lord Buddha and how to meditate. When

they returned home we saw a change in them. They seem to be more calm, though boys being boys we do not know how long this will last.

## A New Year wish

While most of our blind students have returned home to their families for the long holidays, there are a small number who unfortunately have no home to go to.



During the Songkran festival one of the young teenagers who remained in Pattaya was asked if she had a wish for the New Year, and her reply left those present with tears in their eyes. Her wish was that she "has the gift of sight, even if it was for just one day, for an hour, even for just one minute. I would like to see what my friends look like, and also see what I look like. I have never seen myself.

I would like to see what a flower looks like, and see if it as beautiful as it smells.

When visitors arrive speaking a different language I do not know what they are saying, but I can hear their heart in their voice"

It is highly unlikely that this young girl will ever be able to see what she looks like, but what she can see is that she has a future, one that will give her a good life.



## Olympic Gold



Many of you will be watching the Olympic Games later this year, and billions of people around the world will be cheering their compatriots and hoping that their athletes will win the most prized of sporting prizes, an Olympic gold medal.

But less than three weeks after the Olympic closing ceremony, the stadium in East London will once again welcome athletes from around the world. The torch carriers will light the cauldron and athletes will compete for gold at the 2012 Paralympic Games.

One athlete who will be competing at the Paralympic Games is a former student, and current teacher, at the Vocational School for People with Disabilities.

Suppachai Koysub was diagnosed with polio at an early age and has been a wheelchair user most of his life. He will soon be traveling to London to compete in his fourth Paralympic Games. At previous Games, he has won four gold, three silver and one bronze medal and is currently ranked second in the world for wheelchair sprinting. He has broken several world records and, even though he has not yet competed at his fourth Games in London, he is already looking forward to competing in his fifth Games which will take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Please cheer for him and let's all hope that he can bring more medals back to Pattaya.

## A new start

In early April, one hundred and sixty young adults arrived in Pattaya from all over the Kingdom.

They had travelled on buses, taxis, trains and in the back of pick-up trucks. One young man was carried by his father, and all were hoping for the same thing; to be interviewed for, and offered a place on a course at the Redemptorist Vocational School for People with Disabilities.

While residents of big cities, such as Pattaya and Bangkok, are more accepting of people with disabilities, life in the rural areas can be difficult.

Living in small towns and villages, people using a wheelchair, crutches or are missing limbs often find it difficult to find suitable employment.

But after two years at our school they will have no problem finding suitable employment where they will work alongside able bodied colleagues.

Suppachai Koysub was just seventeen years of age when he first arrived in Pattaya in 1994, the same age as many

who recently arrived for an interview. A few years later he was selected to represent Thailand at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games, something that would never have happened if he had not been accepted into the school.

Maybe in a few years time one of our new students will be joining Suppachai on the plane to Rio 2016.



## Graduation at the Day Care Center

In March, we said farewell to our graduating students from the Day Care Center. For two years, they have studied a variety of subjects, all in preparation for when they enter Grade 1 at one of the local government schools.

It is a wonderful moment for all concerned when a youngster, dressed in traditional graduation gown and mortar board, receives his or her certificate. Parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers and volunteers all feel a sense of pride towards these children. When they enter their new classrooms they will have an advantage over the other children. They have learned to read and write, do simple mathematics and they all know a little English.



## Your Day Appeal

But as many of the older kindergarten students are finishing their studies and leaving us, young children continue to arrive.

Pattaya continues to grow at an alarming speed. And as more luxury apartments blocks and expensive hotels are built, the number of people arriving in Pattaya looking for a better life also increases.

Slums continue to grow, and there are an estimated twenty five thousand people living in these squalid areas; five thousand of them are children, and each and everyone of them needs help.



Following the success of the Your Day Appeal in 2010, we are asking you to once again help our children.

If you are about to celebrate your birthday, or a loved one's birthday, an anniversary or commemorating a special day and you wish to give a loved one something different as a gift this year then please consider our Your Day Appeal.

For just 3000 baht (US\$98 - €75 - £62) you can sponsor a day's teaching at the Father Ray Day Care Center. You can choose any day you wish and that day will be dedicated to you.



Your donation will cover the costs of teaching, meals, snacks and activities at the Day Care Center for one day.

Each morning at the Day Care Center the young children raise the Thai flag, sing the national anthem and say a prayer. If you sponsor a day then the children will say a special prayer of thanks to you on that particular day.

The children will also include you in their prayers before lunch, and you will know that on your special day you have helped the poor children of Pattaya.

### And finally...

It was just before Christmas 2009 that one of young boys who attended the Day Care Center passed away.

Little Em went missing one evening in the slum area along the local canals where he was living. All night the residents of the slum searched for little Em, but he was nowhere to be found.

Early next morning the body of a two year old boy was dragged out of the water, and he was immediately identified as Em as he was still wearing his Day Care Center uniform.

Following this tragic event we decided that all the children in their final term at the Day Care Center would be given swimming lessons.

At first many of the youngsters were too scared to get into the water, but with gentle encouragement it was only a matter of a few lessons before the children were jumping into the pool.

Six months ago there was only one little boy who felt confident getting into the water, but by the final swimming lesson before graduation each and every child was able to swim, without the help of floats, arm bands or the coaches.

Everyone here in Pattaya hopes never to receive the news that another young life is lost, and watching our youngsters swim across the pool we know that they are now be able to swim to safety if they find themselves in danger.

Please help our Your Day Appeal to ensure that we can continue to teach the youngsters at the Father Ray Day Care Center.



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