

Sarnelli House

NEWSLETTER



www.sarnelliorphanage.org

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Message from Fr Shea

The school vacation of over two months saw a whirlwind of activity. Father Ole and Brother Keng decided our six houses should be divided by age and school, rather than

who had HIV/AIDS, and who did not. In a bit of reverse discrimination, the AIDS-infected girls were complaining loudly that they were getting girls without AIDS, and that their house, Nazareth, should be kept for only those infected. But, as some of them sullenly packed their belongings and were goose stepped onto trucks, their moods changed, and everyone seems happy at the new accommodations.

The House of Hope is still for the tiny ones, and has 15 runts in attendance. St. Patrick's house for grade school age boys was taken over by girls of that age. "Meh" (Mother) Wan, who rode herd on the boys of that age, was delighted to take in the girls. She demanded changes in the house, and new furniture, bedding, and other amenities were hustled in for her approval. Little girls love to pull their mattresses together, and sleep like piglets. Every night, they drag Meh Wan into their midst, and all was fine until Wan came up with a bodacious case of head lice. Other housemothers joined in to de-lice the pillows and blankets and heads of the children, save for "E.T." E.T. has always marched to a different drummer. She insisted that she could take care of her own case of cooties, and of course, failed in that endeavour. She is now being threatened to have her head shaved.

In the meantime, the boys worked at the fertilizer plant, and cranked out 430 bags of fertilizer for our fields and gardens. Now, all it has to do is rain. We took in 3 young lads, plus 7 girls of junior high school age. We are back to rising numbers and have a total of 136 children living at Sarnelli House. But right from the beginning, we promised God that we would take all comers who need Sarnelli House, and all God had to do was find people to help us. So far, the Lord has kept Her part of the bargain!

God bless you!

The New School Year

In May this year, the new school year began in Thailand. At Sarnelli House in the rural northeast of Thailand, the children are settling down for another year filled with the usual school, church, temple and farm activities that brings familiarity and stability to their lives.



Preparing for the new school term meant rearranging the houses of the children and the work places of some of the staff. Normally children move on from the House of Hope into St Patrick's or Our Lady of Refuge Home for Girls in Viengkhuuk and from Sarnelli House into the teenage houses of Jan and Oscar and Nazareth House. This year the rearrangement meant that those children living with HIV/AIDS and those without it are living together. The other change this year is the children will be living together based on school years, and the boys and girls will live in separate houses. Sarnelli House which used to



house 30 girls and boys with HIV/AIDS will now be home to 36 boys, some with HIV/AIDS and some without, their ages ranging from 5 years old to 14 years. All six houses will house a mix of children and young adults with and without HIV/AIDS. Staff will be moved around too, and at all the houses there will be staff working who are also living with HIV/AIDS themselves and who are well



equipped to make sure particular children continue to take their medicine on time and correctly.

Many of the teenage girls from Sarnelli House have moved over to Our Lady of Refuge Home for Girls and are enjoying the different routine. For meals all the girls sit at tables with 3 other girls who have already been allocated to sit with them. There are chores to do and rosters made and stuck up on the wall about who is responsible for what. Cooking, cleaning, sweeping and mopping the floors are all jobs that are shared by



everyone. The girls wash and iron their own school uniforms. Making costume jewellery is a skill that the girls are enjoying learning. They feel proud when they can see what they have made and know that it will be sold to raise money for Sarnelli House. The best thing however is that they don't have to get up at 4.30 in the morning anymore to get ready for school because they live across the road from the school and they can slouch over any time before 8am.

The boys at Sarnelli House have a new routine also and a change of meal times as well. On arriving home from school at 5pm they change their clothes and go out onto the big field next to the village church and play football. Fr Ole and Brother Keng join in and try and create some order out of the mayhem. The kids return at 6pm for supper and homework and the idea is that they are all exhausted and get a good night sleep. Somehow this doesn't always work as some boys are notorious for never, ever being tired, no matter what exercises or activities have been done to tire them out.

Update on the Outreach Program



Starting the school year at Sarnelli House also means school scholarships for the children of the Outreach Program. On the last Saturday of April children came with their end of year school reports and their identity cards. A photo was taken of each child and their school report copied. Each child had an interview with Br Keng about how their studies are going, and if they were within graduating age what they would like to study next. Each of the children were given a financial scholarship for the upcoming school term, depending on the grade they were studying at school. This covered

the costs for uniforms, school shoes or bags, transport to and from school or even for lunch or snack money everyday. The children signed that they received the money themselves. This year there were seventy children approved for scholarships. They were for children as young as kindergarten to university level students.

The Outreach Program continues to see adults present to the Friday morning clinic in advanced stages of AIDS. Many of them do not know where to go for treatment and still believe that HIV/AIDS is a death sentence. Others are



ashamed and do not want to face the scrutiny and often discrimination of hospital staff or risk seeing someone they may know at the hospital. More elderly people are attending the clinic at DonWai and also the one at Viengkhuuk that Fr Shea runs every Friday morning. The clinics provide basic health care and advice for people with high blood pressure, diabetes and even chronic kidney disease. There are three people who are on kidney dialysis at the local hospital who are supported by the Outreach Program. Transport to and from the hospital, or a monthly living allowance to contribute to their food, travel and hospital expenses are provided. An increasing number of young women from Laos who find themselves pregnant in Thailand and discover they are HIV positive on their routine blood tests have been referred to the Outreach Program. Local hospitals contact Khru Noi and ask for financial assistance. Without Thai identification papers these women cannot be included in the universal health coverage scheme that provides mostly free health care in Thailand. They also cannot legally work in Thailand without them, and so there is very little if no income available to them. Health care expenses for these ladies include blood tests, delivery of the baby costs and ARV

medicine and can be around 3000 baht per month. After giving birth, women with HIV are advised against breast feeding, according to the Thai national health policy and must give formula milk to their babies. The hospitals in general provide a free supply of formula milk, but it is often inconsistent and not enough. The Outreach Program makes up the difference and provides formula milk for these babies as well as to babies whose grandmothers care for them as their young mothers have to go out and find work to feed, clothe and house themselves.



Na is an 17 year old girl who was born with HIV and whose mother died from HIV/AIDS a few years ago. Na completed her schooling to Grade 7 and now she has a baby son named Cartoon who is 3 months old. Na's teenage boyfriend tries to find work where he can but he has no skills and can only find day jobs in construction where the pay is poor and the conditions hard. Na's boyfriend has been feeling unwell and has been encouraged to go for a HIV test as he did not initially know that Na had HIV/AIDS. Na and her baby and sometimes her boyfriend when he is around, live in a small cement house/box with one sliding metal grill door and a window onto the street, there is no running water and there is mattress on the floor where all three sleep. All they own is pushed into the corners in bulging and torn plastic bags. The house literally faces onto the street and is about 6 meters from the road.

Na's stepfather lives in a big two story house on the same property as Na and his daughter from his first wife lives with him. She is a teenager with a baby son the same age as Cartoon, who Na often has to care for with Cartoon. The stepfather pays very little attention to Na and Cartoon. Cartoon is a lively little fellow but small for his age and so far his tests have come back negative for HIV, but it is too early to definitely confirm his HIV status. Na loves Cartoon and she does not want to be parted from him. She wants the opportunity for a job and to be able to provide for Cartoon and his future.

Cartoon and his mother have an uncertain future in

regard to food and housing, job prospects and health issues. There are few government services to pick up those like Na who are vulnerable and open to abuse and insecurity. Na and Cartoon are supported by the Outreach Program and are provided with rice, eggs and tinned fish for Na and formula milk for Cartoon. This is one aspect of the care provided – the other is helping her find a solution to her situation that will keep her and Cartoon together and safe.

Thank you for your generosity in helping Sarnelli House and all its projects bring new hope and love to all these people.



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For more donation details see

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used their names or identified them in photos.

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Written by Kate Introna, May 2014