

Message from Fr. Shea

In this month's newsletter, Kate does a great job explaining all that is done to help abandoned, abused, sick children besides just making sure they are "fed and watered" on time. We are so fortunate with our staff and volunteers. They are all dedicated and skilled at the responsibilities they take upon themselves. They take upon themselves role models of parents, big brothers and sisters and friends. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Brother Keng and Fr. James for the work and sacrifice they do for the children of Sarnelli. They will be transferred in the new Redemptorist appointments. Brother Keng, especially, did yeoman work in the children's education, and in the outreach program, among other things. We will miss the inspiring homilies given by Fr. James to the children at every Saturday mass. We pray the Lord to guide them in their new appointments, and to choose selfless people like them, to assure the success of Sarnelli house.

God Bless you all

Fr Michael Shea C.Ss.R

Keeping on Track

Life at Sarnelli House revolves around many things – the school cycle, the coming and going of the seasons, the arrival of volunteers and the cultural and religious holidays and festivals of the region. With all this going on, it is sometimes easy to forget the individual child who needs to be prepared, encouraged, taught and loved to just get through their day. Currently, there are 110 children and young adults living at Sarnelli House, which includes 19 employees who grew up at Sarnelli House and continue to need emotional support and medical care. Twenty students live away from Sarnelli House and are attending schools and colleges, fully supported with all costs by Sarnelli House. 70 students receive school scholarships through the Outreach Program, both locally and in the neighbouring province of Beung Gan.

These numbers can fluctuate, and between January 2021 and December 2022, 39 young adults and children left Sarnelli House. The majority of them returned home after graduating from Grade 9 or Grade 12. Some smaller children were able to return home because of the respite the families had been given. They had the opportunity to find a job or to create a more safe and stable lifestyle to welcome their child back. In the last six months, eight more children have been sent to live at Sarnelli House. One of the recurring issues is the drug problem in local communities affecting family life. Single parents who are using or selling drugs, babies born in jail, parents who have long term mental health problems from drugs are all reasons why children need protection and safety. Babies as young as one month old have been referred by the Thai Child and Welfare Department to House of Hope Optimistically, the children may be reunited with their parents in the future, but historically this has rarely happened.



School Change

At the beginning of the second term in October 2022, eighteen little ones started at the kindergarten at Rosario Witthayu School in Vienghuk. Previously, they had attended the local government nursery school but there were ongoing problems with poor hygiene and the decision was made to move the children. Rosario Witthayu School has been the school of choice for Sarnelli House for many years. When Sarnelli House mostly had children living with HIV, Fr. Shea realised that the free government schools in the area would not accept them or the children without HIV, whose parents did have it. Fear and ignorance about the spread of HIV were rampant at that time. However, the school run by the St Paul de Chartres sisters did accept them and so the Sarnelli House children continue to attend twenty years on. The school caters for children from nursery age to 15 years old or Grade 9 equivalent. A total of 59 children from Sarnelli House now attend this school. With lots of help from generous donors and sponsors, the cost of uniforms, school bags, shoes and term fees have been covered for all the students. Transport to and from school has been eased a bit for the Sarnelli House school truck drivers. There is now only one school drop off and pick up for all of the children under 15 years of age. They are picked up at two points – Sarnelli House in the village of Donwai, and St Patrick’s House in the village of Pai Si Tong. A house mother and a volunteer go with the school truck to ensure the kids are safe during the journey. The school truck leaves at 0715 and is back by 1630. The small children in pre school have a shorter day and are back home by 1500.



Once the children graduate from Grade 9 at Rosario Witthayu School, they have to choose where to study next. Vocational schools and senior high schools in Nongkhai are the most common options. For those students who have had very good grades consistently over their school years and are highly motivated, there is the option of attending a senior high school in Khon Kaen, and living in a local boarding house run by a former teacher. Br. Keng and Brian O’Riordan assess and identify the students interested, and consider their capacity for self-directed study, motivation and participation in extra curricular school activities. If a student is successful studying for three years at this school, they will usually have the opportunity to continue on to university.



A total of 10 schools will have Sarnelli House students attending their campuses in 2023. The logistics of enrolling, organising and transporting students to the different schools is challenging, yet thankfully the housemothers successfully rise to the occasion every year.

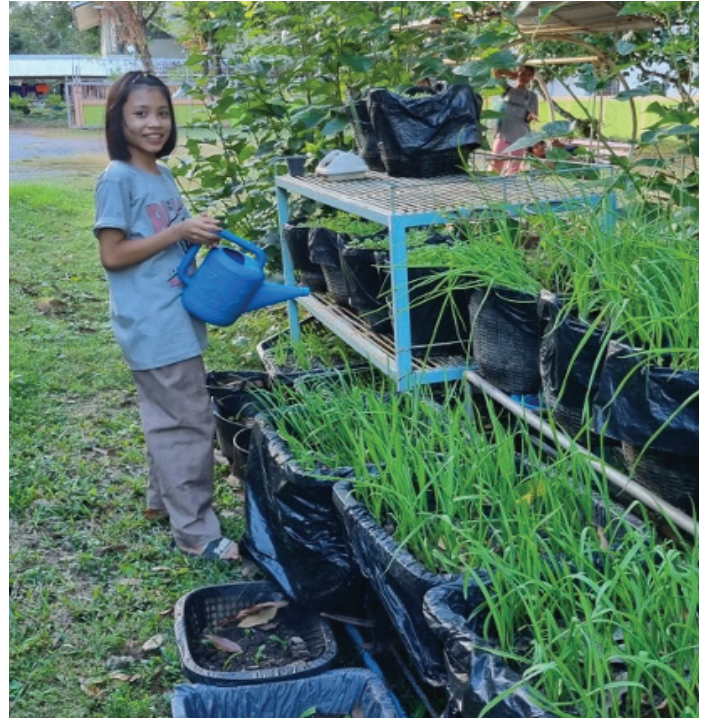
Graduating numbers remain high this year. Eight students graduate from Grade 9 and four more from Grade 12 this month. This latter group includes a young man from a sports school in Rayong and a young lady from the Redemptorists School for the Disabled in Nongkhai. Two students will graduate with a diploma from vocational colleges and two with certificates from a beauty and hair salon and from a local hospitality school. Three young adults will graduate from University, one with a degree in Architecture, another with a degree in Industrial Technology, and the third student who is blind will graduate with a degree in Political Science. Sarnelli House is so proud of the great achievements all these students have made and the obstacles they have overcome.



Teacher Project

A new project having good results at Sarnelli House is the Thai Teacher Project. Funded by Stichting Vrienden van Sarnelli The Netherlands, and commenced in June 2022, it involves two recently graduated grade school teachers working at Sarnelli House for six months. The teachers have free accommodation and food, and receive a monthly salary. Their objective is to improve the Thai literacy and numeracy of the grade school children. During the day, while the children are at school, the teachers spend two hours at House of Hope attending to the play and developmental needs of the toddlers. Monday to Friday, from 17-1900, they teach 11 children, St. Patrick's House and Jan and Oscar House in Pai Si Tong. These 11 children have been assessed and identified as needing extra help with their schoolwork. On Saturday mornings, the teachers' time is spent with five boys from Sarnelli House, reviewing homework and devising new ways of making Math and Thai subjects fun and interesting. They incorporate energetic games played outside to harness some of the energy of the children, as well as songs and interactive learning. Sarnelli House was indeed lucky to have recruited two enthusiastic, lively and motivated young women. Additionally, the teachers have a surprise skill - they are both proficient in traditional Thai dancing. This has allowed them to connect with the teenagers at Sarnelli House and Our Lady of Refuge Home for Girls. There have been some moving and talented displays of Thai dancing at weekend parties, and the teenagers have been proud of their new skills. Not to rest on their laurels, the teachers have proposed an additional project to complete in their remaining time at Sarnelli House. They have observed that many of the younger children at Sarnelli House are not as polite and respectful as Thai children who live with their families. Also, the children have little concept of waiting and being patient. Normally, they will see a visitor arrive at their house and that person will be swamped and their bags quickly examined for anything that might be of interest. Thai culture places a huge emphasis on respect,

hierarchy and patience. Growing up in an institution, however well run, can limit the personal aspect of learning that is common in families. There is competition for love and affection and sometimes, the loudest and neediest receives the most attention. The teachers have developed a module for teaching the children basic politeness and respect for each other and adults. They are great role models and the success of the Teacher Project is already evident. It has been extended from its original finish date and will run until June 2023. Hopefully, two new positions can be funded for the remainder of 2023.



Gardening Project

Like many kids worldwide, some of the Sarnelli House children have an aversion to eating vegetables, particularly those of a green colour. As a way of improving their diet and giving them an understanding of where vegetables come from, a small competition was organised by Fr. James. Each children's house was expected to set up and grow vegetables in a small garden. The children were to be included in preparing and planting as well as watering the garden. They were encouraged to take an interest in what was growing and how to keep it alive until it was ready to be picked and used in their meals. Corander, parsley, shallots, kale, chilli and cucumber are among the plants tended by the children. At Sarnelli House, the boys helped make vegetable beds with rice straw, cow manure and soil. The area was cordoned off with bamboo that was cut to size and tied together to make fences. Seeds were planted and the boys were tasked with the care of the garden. The teenage girls' house at Our Lady of Refuge had a vertical garden and the younger girls took



an interest in planting and watering. The older teenage girls were a bit too bored with the whole project and kept their distance in case they were called on to weed or water the garden. Even the small children at House of Hope had a garden which was beautifully prepared by a housemother, and fenced off by green mesh to prevent the toddlers pulling all the vegetables out. Abandoned tyres made great vegetable beds for the grade school kids at Jan and Oscar and St Patrick's Houses. Fr. James had the unenviable task of awarding a winning house, but wise man that he is, he gave the same award to all the houses and everyone was a winner.

Volunteer Project

The long-term volunteers are back and they are adding great value to the children's lives with their kindness, skills and participation in the children's daily routine. Four young people have come from accredited volunteer agencies in Germany and they have attended pre-exposure courses before arriving at Sarnelli House. The two young women are supported through the EPO Church e.V in Oberhausen and the two young men from Redemptorist Volunteer Ministries in Bonn. Helping to teach english at the Redemptorist School for the Disabled in Nongkhai is

also one of the tasks of the young men. They play sport as well as using educational toys, blocks and art projects in the afternoons and on weekends with the children. They all help out at House of Hope which has 21 kids, by keeping the preschoolers occupied, while the housemothers feed and care for the babies and the four disabled children on the weekends. As well, they ensure the children in wheelchairs are taken for a walk every morning. Another two volunteers from The Netherlands work with the disabled children too. They use music and sight and touch to stimulate the children's brains as well as their bodies. They are setting up a room apart from House of Hope where the affected children can receive therapy in a quiet space. Thanks to all the short and long term volunteers who take time out of their lives and give of themselves to the children at Sarnelli House. They are valued and appreciated.

Fr. Mike received a lovely visit from four Sarnelli House alumni last month. They had all lived and attended school for some time in their childhood and teen years at Sarnelli House nearly 20 years ago. Today they have jobs and are living in different parts of Thailand, but they have never forgotten the kindness, love and shelter they received when they needed it most.



Donations in the USA can be made to:
Friends of Sarnelli House
Box 88234
Milwaukee
WI 53288-0234 USA
(The foundation gives tax cards).

For those outside of the USA Pay Pal is available at sarnellihouse.org



For Donations by Bank Transfer
Bank: Bangkok Bank, Thailand
Branch: Mitraphab Road
A/C No: . 575-0-46655-8
Account: Saving
A/C Name: Sarnelli House Foundation
Swift Code: BKKBTHBK
Bank address:
Bangkok Bank Public Company Limited
854/1 M.5 Mitraphab Road, T.Phochai,
A.Mueang, Nongkhai 43000 Thailand
Tel. +66 42 413011 - 3 Fax +66 42 413014
If you make an international bank transfer, please let us know, so that we can notify you of its safe arrival. Contact: contact@sarnellihouse.org

For more donation details see sarnellihouse.org under Support
Facebook : facebook.com/sarnellihousenongkhai
Instagram : [@lifeatsarnelli](https://instagram.com/@lifeatsarnelli)
Postal Address: Sarnelli House,
PO Box 61, Nongkhai, Thailand 43000.
If you would prefer to receive this and future quarterly newsletters by email or be removed from the mailing list please email to contact@sarnellihouse.org
To protect the privacy of our children we have not used their real names or identified them in photos unless with permission
Written by Kate Inrona February 2023