

Outreach success

Tak Taew an 18 year old girl from the Outreach Program, graduated from vocational college as a fully fledged electrician this year. She was one of two girls among 50 boys in her year who graduated. Tak Teaw's father died from AIDS and her mother is living with HIV and she has a younger brother who is well and supported to attend school by the Outreach Program. Tak Taew is an enthusiastic, happy girl who seizes opportunities that come her way. Her mother has been from job to job, after being sacked when they find out she has HIV. She has never asked for anything for herself and although healthy, is chronically tired. She has worked at sorting rubbish in a garbage dump, selling street food and now she is sewing garments for a big company in Bangkok, earning less than a minimum wage. Tak Taew has been selected to work in Japan through her vocational school and she leaves in a few months for 3 years. She is so excited and she is now at school learning Japanese before she goes. She hopes to earn good money and send most of it home to her mother and brother. Tak Taew is a delight and a testament to the resilience and intelligence of these young adults who face their difficulties with humour and grace.



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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
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To protect the privacy of our children we have not used their real
names or identified them in photos.

Written by Kate Introna, August 2016

Sarnelli House

NEWSLETTER

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Message from Fr Shea

Time is swimming by fast, and with the Mekong River just 40 centimeters from flooding, we hope we do not wind up like Louisiana and some of the other places that rain has brought rivers over their banks.

The long summer vacation is over, and the college age kids are either back in school, or starting their new adventure. In Thailand, once students finish either senior high school or vocational school, they have their choice of specified vocational school, colleges or "Gaw Saw Naw" correspondence courses. This last type of study has students studying on weekends at school, and at other specified times. Other than that, they study on their own and take exams after each course. Our 7 boys at the Gary and Janet Smith building take these courses.

Vocational schools in Thailand are well run and geared towards practical talents of kids who might not be able to do well at college or universities. Vocational courses can bring students to the level of college degrees. Many children prefer these types of schools, because one finishes quicker and goes on to relatively good paying jobs.

This year, Sarnelli House has 27 students studying outside. Two are in the Redemptorist seminary in Sriracha. Others are scattered but bankrolled and closely watched by our Brother Keng, and Mrs. Dtim. Some of our outreach children are also in university, and doing well.

Kate will tell us all about the young folks we help and how they are preparing for life. We are very proud of our students who have completed college or vocational schools and have good jobs. We are proud of them all. Pride now rides with the current crop of scholars!

College days

Ping first came to Sarnelli House in 2001 when she was 8 years old. She had been living with her mother and father in a small rural village about 20 km from Nongkhai town. Her father became sick with AIDS and died without any treatment. Her mother was soon diagnosed with the HIV virus and became ill with Tuberculosis (TB). Ping was also diagnosed with HIV. Before Ping's father died, he and his wife talked about the best way to ensure Ping was cared for as they were both sure they would die soon. They had heard of Fr Mike and his work with people with AIDS and so after her husband's death in 2001,



Ping's mother entrusted Ping to Sarnelli House under Fr Mike's care. It wasn't until 2003 that the children at Sarnelli House were able to access Anti RetroViral (ARV) treatment for HIV, and Ping started her lifelong medicine at this time. Despite being close to death and ostracised from her village, with the help of Fr Mike and the Outreach Program Ping's mother

was also able to start treatment. Ping grew up at Sarnelli House as one of the oldest girls and used to help to give out the medications to the sick children and take care of them. She attended Rosario School with the other children and was a conscientious student,



always trying hard and getting good results. As her mother gradually improved on her treatment, the Outreach Program built her a small house on the outskirts of the town, and Ping eventually went home to live with her. She was supported financially through her school years by Sarnelli House and the Outreach Program, and she would come and help out on weekends at Sarnelli House especially when there were activities for the younger children. Ping was always polite as well as being beautiful and the little ones looked up to her, full of admiration and respect. She had decided from a young age to become a nurse as she wanted to be able to help her mother when she became sick. Ping entered Nursing College in 2012 in Udon Thani and graduated this year.

Ping wrote to one of her sponsors before she graduated and it is used with her permission here.

Dear

How are you? I am fine. I have read the books you sent me. They are very good books and really encourage me. It helps me to reflect how happy and lucky I am. At present I am studying at the nursing college in Udonthani. I still have two months more to graduate. There are 229 students in my class. We all have to test the licensing examination for nurses which will license us to be registered nurses. To pass the exam is my main focus and goal at the moment. It gives me a worry too. Last week I failed an exam. I missed only one point. It really made me down and disappointed. I cried, but after crying I felt a bit better. I had talked to my mother about it and she really cheered me up. I will do it better and study harder next time. How is the weather ...? It is really hot in Thailand. Sometimes we get hot, cold and rain on the same day. Fr Mike has given me your present for my graduation. Thank you very much for your support you have given me for many years. To become a nurse is my dream and now it nearly becomes true. If you have not supported and

encouraged me, and the support of Fr Mike and his good example of caring for the sick, I might not be able to succeed where I am today. I have never blamed anyone about having this health problem. Moreover it helps me to understand those who have health problems more. I am courageous and have knowledge to help people in need, and I will do my best about this in the future. I would like to thank you again that you help me to follow my dream. You have given me happiness and smiles. With this letter I enclose my picture in nursing uniform. It represents my thanks, and I hope you will like it. May I ask you a favor? I would like to continue writing to you after my graduation to tell you about my work. I hope it will not bother you.

On my graduation day my mother will be there and we will take some photos. I wish that you could join me taking photo on that day. It will be very special.

Lastly, I ask Mother Mary to bless you happiness and good.

Best wishes and with love....



The total cost for Ping to complete her 3 years of education in senior school in Udon Thani and then her 4 years of nursing college including accommodation, food and all school and university fees was 874,000 THB = US\$25,000. She and her mother would never have been able to afford this alone. Her mother, Fr Mike and all the staff are very proud of Ping. She has always hoped to come back and work at Sarnelli House as a nurse, to help other children who are abandoned, orphaned and sick. The door is wide open and the job is available when she finishes her 3 year contract working for the government hospital.

Meeting the needs...

This year, 27 young adults are living and studying away from Sarnelli House for the first time in their lives, and the need to touch base with them on a regular basis is essential. They have grown up within the confines of Sarnelli House in a rural village, 20 km from a big town and their experience of outside life is limited.

The staff who work with the young adults once they leave Sarnelli House do an amazing job. They often fulfil more than



one role be it house mother or accountant and then they become trusted friend, counsellor and mother. This is true of many but none so much as Ms Dtim. Apart from her full time job of accounting, she keeps track of student expenses and advises and counsels them on all manner of personal and schooling problems. Br Keng also fits into this category – he meets with the teenagers and together they select schools. He takes them to enrol and sit entrance exams and finds accommodation for them. Both of these staff members do a wonderful job.

Recently fifteen young students returned to Sarnelli House for Fr Mike's birthday celebrations. There were 5 boys and 10 girls, the youngest was seventeen years old and the eldest twenty three years old. Eight of them are living with HIV. They also came to drop off their end of term results and pick up their money for the next term. Br Keng invited them all to a meeting and he took the opportunity to hand out a questionnaire that the students could fill in anonymously. The main feedback from the students was about responsibility and needing support. Most of them, wrote that one of the hardest things on leaving Sarnelli House was learning responsibility. Living at Sarnelli House meant there were house mothers to do the washing, cooking and cleaning and then suddenly, they were not there when they moved away. Attending lectures on time, washing and cooking was a huge learning curve and a worry for some of them. The other point that came through was the need for someone to talk with or visit them, someone to counsel them and share their worries with. Even with the use of mobile phones and the ever present social media there is still a real cry from the students for a physical presence to affirm, console and encourage them in their endeavours.

