

Sarnelli House

NEWSLETTER

www.sarnelliorphanage.org

 [facebook.com/ sarnellihousenongkhai](https://facebook.com/sarnellihousenongkhai)  [@lifeatsarnelli](https://instagram.com/lifeatsarnelli)

September 2017



Message from Fr. Shea

When I was a mere lad on the Aberdeen Angus farm that our family owned, I was already on the tractor by age 9. We fed the cows and calves, and drove cattle from one pasture to another. In our early teens, my brothers and I learned to separate, brand and inoculate cattle and castrate the steers. We baled hay, shocked wheat and oats, and did many other tasks on the farm. All our friends did as well. We worked side by side with our fathers and uncles and cousins. We never thought we were exploited.

It kind of surprised me when we received letters chiding us for making our kids plant and harvest rice; catch and clean fish, slop the pigs and raise ducks and chickens. I guess that in some parts of the First World, it is considered unlawful to have a child work until they are 16 years old, or so. The children actually like this type of work, save possibly for some girls who worry about their complexion, while working in the sun. But they are all dressed up in jackets and long pants, and what with cloth wrapped around their faces, they look like the local Taliban.

The kids here are taught by local folks who tend to our cattle and pigs and gardens, the children in return are grateful and happy for the attention and the tips. Besides the work on the farm and the vegetable gardens, our girls make jewelry at Viengkhu, with Sister Lek and Miss Dtak teaching and monitoring them. The kids are amazingly good at making the jewelry. Other girls work in the bakery where once a month Sr. Dominic makes the 200 kilometer trip up from KhonKaen to teach baking. Cookies, cakes, bread and cupcakes are churned out. Since some of the kids are living with HIV, there are ignorant folks who would scream if we attempted to sell to schools or outside Sarnelli House so we keep it in house.

But Kate will, with her great choice of words, make this all interesting and understandable.

God bless and thank you all
Fr Michael Shea

Working for their lives

Caring for children of all ages at Sarnelli House is a 24 hour effort and requires patience, a sense of humor, love and a great deal of money. Education and health care and food and clothing bills are never ending. Hidden expenses such as the maintenance of buildings like the children's homes, the offices, clinics and store room increases costs. The maintenance of vehicles adds up too. On the farm there are two tractors, two plows and farm machinery including a rice mill, a fertiliser pellet making machine, a thrashing machine and a baler. There is electricity to be paid for, cooking gas to be bought and fuel is required for the vehicles. Stationery is needed for the office, and internet connection and repairs are another expense. Regular replacement of beds and furnishings in the children's homes and first aid equipment is a must. Then of course there are staff salaries - an essential and a significant cost. No assistance from the Thai government for these expenses has been forthcoming. Despite this, every year Sarnelli



House makes it to the next year, thankful for the incredible generosity of friends, sponsors and benefactors.

In accepting this generosity, the children are mindful of contributing back to Sarnelli House. They have chores and regular work to do and they are happy to help, hopefully this instils in them a sense of working for what they need and not expecting someone else will provide for them.

The teenage girls at Our Lady of Refuge Home for Girls at



Vienghuk have two activities they like to do. They are led by Ms. Lek who is the house manager and Ms. Tdak who is the evening house mother. Costume jewellery, bags, wrist ties and key rings are made under Ms Lek's guidance. She is skilled as a seamstress and she scours youtube videos to find something appropriate for the materials she can source and for the girls' skills. The girls have set times when they can work on the handicrafts – it is usually in the evenings after homework and on the weekends. In the school holidays the girls devise their own timetable but they know they have to set aside a couple of hours a day for handicrafts. The products go out to visitors and donors who sell them at fairs and fetes and at schools and churches, and the girls are extremely proud of the work they do and that they can contribute to Sarnelli House. In 2016 the girls were lucky to be introduced to a renowned Thai jewellery designer who came to visit and teach skills in working with natural, locally sourced materials. Khun Rudee created some designs and had a workshop for the girls where she taught them the



basic skills and techniques. Thanks to the hard work of some committed Thai friends there is now a product called BraceLove. The girls weave rice stalks and use naturally dyed cotton to make the jewellery. Ms Tdak has created new designs as well and they have been sold successfully in Bangkok at various functions.

In the school holidays it is not all play. There is painting and farm work to be done and this year the girls from Nazareth House and volunteers painted the newly constructed wall around their house. Fr. Mike has put in an order for a sentry box and guard dog to go with the wall - but they haven't turned up yet! The painting took the girls a few weeks to do as they are not early morning risers and were extra slow painting in the heat of the day.

Litter is a problem and the lesson of not littering is still a



work in progress at Sarnelli House and in many provinces in Thailand. The kids often miss the bin completely when throwing their trash away and the football field where the Sarnelli House and the village boys play is always scattered with rubbish by the end of the week. Training one of the boys from the farm to pick up the trash and empty the bins is a challenge as our newly designated person is a bit slow and needs to be told everything before he does it. But with the help of his own fluoro vest and working gloves he is beginning to take on the job and feel confident in his achievement.



Preparing fields, planting rice, harvesting and milling the rice are all jobs that are essential on Jomp's Farm. The teenage girls and the female staff over a few weekends do the majority of the rice planting, and the farm staff and the teenage boys prepare the fields, manage the rice seedlings and maintain the paddies while waiting for the harvest. When harvest time comes around it is all hands in the fields again to harvest the rice by hand, bundle it up, dry it, put it through the thresher to separate the grains and store it ready for milling. This work gives the children an understanding of where their food comes from and how it gets to their plate. The teenagers actually enjoy being out in the fields despite some initial grumbling, the comradere and sense of fun they bring to these days is a real joy for all.

At the children's homes every morning at what seems like the crack of dawn the children are up and sweeping inside and around their house. In the afternoons the little ones have to put their washed clothes away. The teenagers have to do



their own laundry and at Our Lady of Refuge Home for Girls and Nazareth House they learn to cook their meals, clean their dishes and tidy the kitchen and eating rooms.

The bakery at Don Wai provides the girls and the little boys skills in baking, cake decorating and cooking. The kids love to help measure out ingredients, decorate cakes and eat the fruits of their labour. Sr Dominic and volunteers use the



kitchen to teach the children new recipes. They bake for special occasions and for after school snacks.

Whenever Ms. Kung needs some help with farm work on the weekends the boys at Sarnelli House jump at the chance to help. It is a change from their normal weekend routine and they love to be out on the farm. They enjoy learning and working with the farm staff. Whether it is plucking chickens, catching and cleaning fish they have fun and appreciate the opportunity to help Ms. Kung.

Outreach Update

The Outreach school scholarships are given out twice a year at the beginning of each school term. Students from surrounding villages who are enrolled in the scholarship program come in on a Saturday morning. They are usually bought in by a family member and the quiet space around the office is littered with haphazardly parked motorbikes and tuk tuks. To pick up their scholarship money, the students must attend in their school uniforms and bring their school grades, as well as receipts for expenses. They wait in line to drop their grades and receipts off, have their photos taken, write their thank you letters and be interviewed by one of the outreach staff about their studies. For the teenagers the discussion is about what plans or interests they have for their higher level study. Each student must sign for their scholarship money which is dependant on what year they are studying in. Generally there is a snack and small stationery gift for them to go home with, and by midday it is all quiet again. In March this year there were a total of 77 students who received a scholarship ranging from pre schoolers to those completing senior high school. This included the Outreach programs in Nong Seng (8 children) and Beung Gan (9). Once a student from the Outreach School Scholarship program enters



university the scholarship increases significantly to cover most of the living, tuition, food and activity costs. Depending on the university students are accepted into the cost can be over 120,000 baht /year (\$US3,600.00).

Many students that are on the Outreach School Scholarship program come from troubled and poor families where violence and disease contribute to their precarious financial, health and emotional states.

Paris is a young woman of 19 years of age who has been supported by the Outreach School Scholarship program for most of her life and has also lived at Sarnelli House. She was born with HIV and has never known her father who died from AIDS. She has a younger sister by another father and her mother has had numerous partners while she was growing up. Two of her mother's partners died from AIDS and a third beat her up so terribly she left him. Paris's mother has also been sick with AIDS but she has survived and she has a new partner and is now able to work, but she is thin and anxious and not yet 40 years old. When Paris was ten years old she and her sister witnessed the stabbing to death of her stepfather at their home. When Paris was eleven years old her mother gave her to Fr Mike to care for as she was not getting proper medical care at the local hospital. Her mother went away to find work and her sister went to live with relatives. When she was thirteen years old after two

severe bouts of shingles, Paris started treatment for HIV but she did not tolerate her ARV medication well. She also found it hard to adapt to the routine of Sarnelli House. Paris was a bright and clever child but she had a tendency to create dramas wherever she went. She eventually went back to live with her mother when she was fourteen years old and was supported by the Outreach Program for health and scholarship costs. Her mother was working at home taking in laundry. Notwithstanding her troubled past Paris did well at school and was ambitious to make something out of herself, but still she had problems. In Grade 11 she was beaten up and hospitalised by some girls in her class because they didn't like how bright she was and how unguarded her tongue was. Paris was moved out of that class and finally she graduated from senior high school with good marks. As of this year Paris has moved out of home to university and she is beginning to study law. She is excited and nervous all at the same time and deeply grateful for all the help she has received from her sponsors and Sarnelli House.

Thankfully for young people like Paris, designated funds that come to Sarnelli House from sponsorship money, the Greer Foundation and Friends of Sarnelli House UA help not only Paris but 25 other students to continue their education at university this year.



Address of
Friends of Sarnelli House
UA in the USA

**Box 88234
Milwaukee WI
53288-0234 USA**

(The foundation can give
tax deduction slips,
please request)

For Donations by Bank Transfer

Bank: KRUNG THAI BANK PUBLIC
COMPANY LIMITED

Branch: THASADEJ

A/C No: 295-0-01542-5

Account: SAVING, A/C

A/C Name: MR. MICHAEL SHEA AND

MS. BOONCHAN LASA, MRS.

WIMON THAMMAWONG

Swift Code: KRTHTHBK

Routing No. /CHIPS UID: 00785

For more donation details see

www.sarnelliorphanage.org under Support

Facebook : facebook.com/sarnellihousenongkhai

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
volunteer@sarnelliorphanage.org

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

Written by Kate Introna, August 2017