

Message from Father Shea

Sarnelli House first met Laurence Pian under tragic and dire consequences. Laurence, a lady from Switzerland, lost her two boys in the horrible tsunami that hit the southern coast of Thailand on Boxing Day, 2004.



Laurence set up a foundation in her boys' names, the Jan and Oscar Foundation. On her first trip to Sarnelli, she saw the grim shape the old school truck was in. She donated money so that we could buy a new long bed 6 wheel truck, and put sides and roof and seats in, so the kids could travel safely.

Then, she returned and after talking to the staff, she decided to build a building for teenage boys with HIV/AIDS. The Jan & Oscar House is on the same compound as St. Patrick's Boys' Home and the House of Hope for the wee ones. St.Pat's boys and "J & O" boys study and do homework together, eat and play and work together. There is a kitchen and dining room for both houses on the compound. We are very fortunate to have someone like Laurence who stepped in to help find the money along with the Rotary Club in Pully Switzerland, for the building when we had no one else to help. We wish that Jan and Oscar were still alive and we could have gotten the money another way. But these two handsome young lads will never be forgotten by us.

God Bless

Fr Mike Shea C.S.s.R



The Jan and Oscar House

In 2010 the Jan and Oscar House situated in the small village of Pi Si Tong was opened. Previously all 70 children living with HIV/AIDS were living at Sarnelli House in the village of Don Wai. However life was challenging for both the staff and the younger children as the older kids began to grow and enter adolescence. During this time having the teenage girls and boys living together meant there was a volatile mix of tears, tantrums and hormones which was often hard to manage. The house mothers and Fr Shea had to call on every skill to cope with this large adolescent odyssey.



Laurence and her husband Allesandro at the opening of the Jan and Oscar House

With the separation of the teenage boys to the Jan and Oscar House and the teenage girls to Nazareth House, Sarnelli House now houses 40 children living with HIV/AIDS, and they are predominately under 15 years of age. At the Jan and Oscar House there are 20 boys. Sleeping arrangements are on the second floor in a dormitory style room. All the boys have their own bed and a small chest of drawers next to them, on top of which they cram all their personal memorabilia, whether that be siamese fighting fish in glass jars, cuddly toys or gifts from sponsors. They each have a narrow metal wardrobe where they can hang their

school uniforms and clothes. A large shower block and toilet cubicles complete the room. Ms Jit who is the manager of the Jan and Oscar House has a small bedroom and bathroom at the end of the boys' room. Downstairs is a large open room which contains a TV and 2 computers that are always in a state of repair, and tables for the boys to do their homework. There is a laundry out back where the boys do their own laundry and they can find their way around a washing machine in a very impressive manner. Behind the shaded-in area where the clothes are hung out to dry and the push bikes are kept is the most prized possession of all - the Swimming Pool. The boys from the Jan and Oscar House have to clean it regularly and they have been taught how to check the water and clean out the filter, and they take pride in this responsibility.

Staff

Ms Jit is the house mother at the Jan and Oscar House. She has worked for Fr Shea for the last 4 years



Ms Jit with some of her boys and Lyn

and her family are from the village of Pi Si Tong. Ms Jit's cousins are also house mothers and her brother works as the handyman/gardener for Sarnelli House. Previously Ms Jit was a Catholic nun and worked in Chiang Mai with the hilltribe people running a school and outreach centre. She now is one of the senior managers at Sarnelli House who Fr Shea relies on to

manage the boys. She is kind and patient, and when any of the boys are sick they often spend the night on the floor in her room watching the small grainy black and white TV. Ms Jit is also very much involved in the farming and agriculture side of Sarnelli House and encourages and teaches the boys how to tend the vegetables and fruits behind the Jan and Oscar House. Another staff member Ms Dak helps Ms Jit- she irons the boys' school uniforms and helps with the cleaning, supervises the medications, dishes out the food and helps with the homework. Both ladies grapple with the challenges of 20 orphaned teenage boys living with HIV/AIDS. Some of the boys study well and are getting good marks, others have learning problems and still can't read while others have emotional and abandonment problems. All of them have to face their illness and their pasts and have to find a future for themselves, Ms Jit and Ms Dak guide them and support them on their journey.

Reducing the stigma of HIV/AIDS

The Jan and Oscar House and St Patrick's Home for boys are separated by a kitchen and communal dining room. Here the boys from both houses eat their meals together. In the evenings they play together – either football, basketball or the skilful Thai game of takraw. There are no team members discriminated against on the basis of HIV but more on the basis of being too young as the young boys from St Patrick's clamour to join the games. Kindergarten school kids from the House of Hope next door to the Jan and Oscar House wander over in the afternoons to play with the older boys and join in with whatever is happening.



The teenagers from Sarnelli House join a camp for teenagers living with HIV/AIDS

While at Sarnelli House the boys were handed their ARV (AntiRetroViral) medications every day at 6pm

and 6pm by the house mothers to take. Now at the Jan and Oscar House they are learning responsibility and have to ensure that they take their medicine themselves. At close to 6 pm you will hear a bell ring and the boys will head to the kitchen for a glass of water and be back out to play again in a few minutes. They incorporate taking their 6pm ARV medications into their normal evening activities.

Ms Jit and Ms Dak are on hand and discreetly encourage those boys whose memory of the 6pm ritual are not so good. After some trial and error with the medication, the boys now go to the medicine room at Sarnelli House every Saturday morning after mass, and there prepare their medicines for the week ahead in their dosette boxes. They are checked by Ms Noi and Ms Jeap, and the boys are quizzed on the name of the tablets and the doses, which in time they mostly get right.



There are many challenges with teenagers taking their ARV medicine regularly and on time, and the issue is usually about adherence. At the Srinagarin Hospital where a lot of the Sarnelli House children go for their HIV treatment the Paediatric Infectious Diseases Team have had a number of deaths from HIV/AIDS, because teenagers stopped taking their ARV medication or didn't take it correctly and so the virus multiplied and progressed in their bodies and became resistant to the drugs available in Thailand to treat it. This is a constant reminder of how deadly the disease can be.

Teep

Teep came to Sarnelli House when he was 6 years old in 2001, both his parents had died from HIV/AIDS and when the villagers found out that Teep also had HIV/AIDS they physically abused him and he had no one to care for him. When he arrived at Sarnelli House he was a quiet boy who rarely smiled or talked and he looked different so he was teased a lot by the children. Teep took all the teasing and the sickness with out a



Teep carrying the rice seedlings for planting

complaint – he had numerous bouts of herpes infection or shingles and he still has the scars today. Eventually in 2003 he started on his ARV medicine. Teep was also found to be mentally slow with a low IQ. When he lived at Sarnelli House with the 70 other children with HIV/AIDS he did not compete with the other kids for the house mothers' affection but was always quiet. At school he was unable to learn to read or write but he developed a fascination with anything on wheels and loved to see trucks. When the fish ponds on Jomp's Farm were being excavated he could be found on the weekend sitting in the cabin of one of the huge digging trucks happy and content. One weekend he fainted as he had been out in the sun just watching the work and had forgotten to eat or drink such was his fascination. Teep moved to the Jan and Oscar House in March 2011 and he hasn't looked back, he has blossomed and come into his own. Teep has grown taller than most of the other boys and he is strong and enjoys any sort of physical work. The days of the boys teasing him or picking on him are over as he can now fight back. With his learning disabilities he has stopped school and he is much happier. He helps every day on the farm sitting in the back of the pick up truck as it is driven around the houses to collect rubbish and slops for the pigs. He helps the men with the maintenance of the farm and the orchard. Teep is even given to singing with the boys and he smiles and responds verbally much more than he ever has. He tells Ms Jit when the boys are teasing him or misbehaving



Palm, Net and Teep with Ben Ummels

and he loves it when his favourite visitors like Ben from The Netherlands arrive to teach him more music and lavish attention on him. He knows what size and shape



his ARV tablets are but cannot remember the names of them or tell when its 6 o'clock. He is an important part of the Jan and Oscar family, and he will remain at Sarnelli House for as long as he wants to – which may be forever for Teep has always wanted to be a farmer.



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

Postal Address: Sarnelli House,
PO Box 61, Nongkhai, Thailand 43000.

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email or
unsubscribe, please email volunteer@sarnelliorphanage.org

Written by
Kate Introna, Sept 2012

Sarnelli House