



Message from Fr. Shea

In this issue of the newsletter, Kate has written the tales of two of our kids, one who returned sick, penniless and discouraged, and the other who has successfully



completed his college education. Both suffered hardships right from the beginning of their lives and both are reaching their potential in different ways. Many kids leave and come back. For some girls who went out and were lured into situations they could not handle, and certainly were not trained to resist, we have them coming back with many problems.

No matter what their situation, we take them in and do our best to help. Our staff including Kate, our nurse and Brian her husband are all kind and compassionate care givers. Some of our seasoned staff seem to possess the firmness and discipline needed.

Soon, Brother Keng and Brian will have a team coming in to give seminars, practical advice and guidance for the “walking wounded”. Many of these kids had few choices in life and seem to have been beaten down by society .

Hopefully, we can do much to remedy the situation.

God Bless you all.

Different Pathways

Welcoming, forgiving and accepting young adults who grew up, leave and need to return to Sarnelli House is very much part of the Sarnelli House ethos. Fr. Mike’s example of unconditional love reflects the Gospel parable of the Prodigal Son. He is called to act on this frequently. Although there is no strict cut off age by which Sarnelli House kids have to leave, they are encouraged to find jobs and live outside when they go as far as they are capable in their education. However, some young adults have come from damaging places of poverty, trauma and abandonment and this affects their life choices. They sometimes leave Sarnelli House in the middle of their studies. They come back when they have nowhere else to go, and they come back to the only place that was willing to accept them at the beginning of their lives, or when they were in situations of grave danger or sickness. Cases of drug taking, love affairs that go wrong, sickness, and exploitative jobs, have been experiences of some of the teenagers and young adults who return. They are offered a job at Sarnelli House, such as cleaning, cooking, gardening or whatever their capabilities extend to. The job offer is not because they are the best person for it, but because they need security and a second chance. Love, patience and acceptance are required in abundance for just one damaged young adult. Fr Mike has stores of it, and then some leftover for more than one hundred other children in his care. He is a powerful example of love in action and his staff have learnt from him over the years.



Returning after 20 years

Tap was born with HIV, and his dying mother bought him to Sarnelli House when he was six years old in 2002. She entrusted him to Fr. Mike and she died from AIDS soon after. Tap had numerous infections as a child because of his low immune system. He started his Antiretroviral (ARV) medications when he was eight years old at Sarnelli House. He was a polite, smiling little boy and apart from some deafness as a left over from chronic ear infections, he grew up well liked and easygoing. He graduated from Grade 9 at Rosario School, but he wasn’t suited to school life so was encouraged to enroll in a short vocational course to become an electrician. Upon completing this, he left to work in a hotel on one



of the islands south of Bangkok. He stayed for a while and then left with a friend from Sarnelli House. Together, they secured stable employment with a company installing mirrors and aluminium windows. For six years Tap lived his life, found a girlfriend and maintained his job. However during this time, Tap wasn't taking his ARV medications correctly and rarely showed up for hospital appointments to have his blood monitored. During the course of his young life at Sarnelli House he had seminars and one on one sessions with health professionals about living with HIV and the importance of taking his medications. On top of this, the Outreach Program also provides transport and food costs to attend hospital appointments for all young adults living with HIV who have left Sarnelli House. Despite this preparation and assistance Tap ignored his health. He was then living



with his girlfriend in a suburb in Bangkok but he was fired from his job because he couldn't physically work as he became sicker. He needed hospitalization and an operation for a brain infection caused by the HIV virus attacking his immune system. His girlfriend had to care for him in hospital and they had no income to pay the bills or buy food. Tap asked Sarnelli House for help and money was sent to cover his hospital and living expenses by the Outreach Program.

When it was time to be discharged from hospital, he had no one to care for him and no place to live. His girlfriend had left him when she realized he had HIV and he could no longer work. After communication with the hospital staff about where to discharge him to, he was sent back to Sarnelli House. He was homeless, weak and alone and he arrived to Sarnelli House barely recognizable



from the young man who had left six years previously. It was clear that he could not live alone and that he needed nursing care. He was admitted to The Garden of Friendship, run by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Nongkhai. It is a centre that cares for people sick from AIDS. Tap had a long admission to Nongkhai Hospital while he was there, and he was treated for TB and other AIDS defining illnesses. During his hospital stay, some of his old



friends from the farm at Sarnelli House went to the hospital to care for him. They had to wash him, feed him and make sure he took his medication; they slept on a simple mat on the floor beside his bed. He was in a single room and he was left alone by the nursing staff who called in to put his medications on his bedside table. Cleaning the room was avoided and



the stigma of HIV seemed just as prevalent as it was 20 years previously when Tap was a boy. Despite the odds, Tap improved, and he went back to the Garden of Friendship to recover. He needed a lot of care and support before he could be independent again. Tap spent more than a year at The Garden of Friendship, and re-learned how to take his medications and to care for himself. He never heard from his girlfriend again. Finally, early in 2022, Tap returned to Sarnelli House, which had been his dream ever since he became sick. He is now working with Mr. Wit and the maintenance crew as an electrician. He is paid a salary and lives in one of the small farm houses on Jomp's Farm. Tap takes his own medications on time, and he has learnt a lot more about his illness. He is immensely grateful for the opportunity Sarnelli House has given him and he talks openly about his past experiences. He is determined never to be that sick again. He talks with the boys living with HIV at Sarnelli House, about the importance of taking their medications. Tap still has a slight limp and his speech is at times slow but he can wield a power drill and fix an electricity problem with confidence. Having Tap back at Sarnelli House 20 years after he arrived is a moving example of the love and acceptance of the Sarnelli House family under the leadership of Fr. Mike Shea.

Opportunities

Another young man who was an orphan and living with HIV, grew up at Sarnelli House like Tap. This year he has completed his degree in business administration at university. He has suffered with low self-esteem and life has not been easy for him, despite his ambition and

intelligence. He will launch himself into the job market very soon and is looking forward to his independence. After 13 years of being under the care of Sarnelli House he will be on his own and he is ready for the challenges of life. In his letter to his sponsors he explains his feelings of gratitude.

This letter will be the last letter I will have the opportunity to write to you, because I have completed my education. I have a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting. First of all, I'm going to have to ask you the same questions that I've always asked you. How are you? As for me, I'm fine. How is the weather in your country? In Thailand, it is now starting to enter the rainy season, but it's hot and cool on some days. I think the people who live here are used to this weather. These may be simple questions, but I ask honestly, because at least I'm glad to have the opportunity to learn about you.

And now we have reached this moment. I've been through a lot. There have been good and bad times, sometimes miserable and mostly happy. Sometimes I get my wish. Sometimes I get disappointed. But I promise I won't be discouraged because you've given me a lot of things in the past. Education, experience. I've learned a lot of things. I got a great opportunity. I've opened up the world to myself. Before, I thought the world was so unfair. I see other friends, they have a good family. They always have good stuff to use. There's



laughter. There's a smile. Afterwards, I learned that every life has to have obstacles, no matter how small or large they are, but what will allow us to overcome them is ourselves. I can't imagine if I didn't have you to support my education, what would my life be like. I would have lived in a narrow society full of oppression. From the opportunity you gave me, I'm more confident. I can do a lot of things myself. I have met good people. I have found a new world. I really appreciate you.

I'm looking for a job. I've filed applications in a lot of places, some companies have arranged for interviews and some companies are waiting for interviews. The job I want to do is marketing because I've been interning at ...in the marketing department. I've learned a lot, and I really like it. It is a challenging and exciting line of work. I am trying to look for a place to work in Bangkok and in the province where I used to live. With these two places, there are the same differences. In other words, the province is the place I've lived in for decades, and it's also my starting point. Bangkok is a province that when I went there, I liked it, since Bangkok always has a lot of opportunities. Privacy and facilities are available. It also offers a full range of transportation. And where these two places are the same is that they are both cities with quite a lot of good amenities. Although the province I live in is not as good as Bangkok, but the transportation and things are quite comfortable. However, I will try to think and reflect on everything in the best possible way, since it is a transitional part of my life. If we choose a job that is not okay, quitting the job often isn't a good thing. So I'm going to choose the job that suits me best. From now on, I have to make my own money. I think it's not difficult if we get to do the right job for us and we feel blessed with it.

All the time you've been helping me and supporting me, I feel very grateful and pleased. I wish you and

your family every success, even though there are many obstacles, I wish that you can get past them. I'll always pray for you. If one day I feel discouraged, I'll think of the day you gave me a great opportunity. I'll think about a lot of things that have been going on. If I'm ever in trouble, I know that I am able to get through it. If in the future I have the opportunity to go to your country, I hope we can meet and discuss things from the past. I really hope to have that day.

Finally, I would like to thank you for everything sincerely again. What you've given me is invaluable. Whatever the future holds, you'll always be in my heart.

Sponsors continue to be very valuable and appreciated members of the Sarnelli House family, as reflected in the letter here. Some sponsors have supported one child for close to 15 years, or more. They have supported them through their childhood and young adulthood, until they have left Sarnelli House on completion of their education. Other sponsors kindly support different children one after another. This is because some children stay at Sarnelli House for the short term only. Or young adults leave prematurely for a variety of reasons, but mostly because of poor life choices. Despite this, many sponsors thankfully stay the course and pick up the next child in need of care. We are grateful for all sponsors, donors and friends of Sarnelli House. We hope we can continue to provide with their support, pathways to independence and the love and support for those young adults who need 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



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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

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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, September 2022