

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS 2015
TO ALL!**



www.sarnelliorphanage.org

Sarnelli House Christmas Newsletter December 2015

This Year of the Lord 2015 was a time of hope and happiness and also a time of sorrow and pain for us here at Sarnelli. It was mirrored in the world outside with similar experiences among the folks who help and support Sarnelli House. 2015 saw some kids graduate from college and go out to seek their fame and fortune.

We were blessed with many guests and volunteers, who were a great help to the staff and to the kids. My brother Kevin, his wife Margaret and my niece Caitrin visited early in the year. Kevin is a lawyer and was instrumental in setting up our Foundation in the US (Friends of Sarnelli House UA). Kevin is the president of this Foundation, and together with his secretary, Laurel Bowar, takes care of all the banking and sends the monthly sums we need to operate. They also do heavy lifting when time to fill out all the tax forms and re-send tax exemption letters to all donors. Actually, there is not enough space to list all those who raise money and care for Sarnelli House. Suffice it to say that we cherish all that you do for us. You know who you are, as do we, and the Lord will bless you abundantly.

Weather-wise, this was one weird year. Monsoons usually begin in late May, but all the way into August, folks relied on rain storms to prepare the fields. The monsoon rains (steady, heavy rain all day and night) did not come until middle August. We wisely opted for a new strain of rice, which takes about 3 months to harvest. It is an offshoot of miracle rice, with a bigger kernel. But, despite all the planting problems, we harvested a bumper crop of rice, and now we have planted our

vegetable gardens.

Some of our farm work consists in raising Brahmin cattle; pigs, chickens, ducks and geese, plus 7 big fish ponds filled with fish. It was this work that caused us our greatest grief this year. The farm hands were butchering a pig in October, and it was raining, and the cement was slippery. One of our lads, Teep, a big good natured kid we kept with us, because of a low I.Q. (he wanted to stay and work here, knowing that if he was on his own, he'd wind up either working in a mine in Laos or shanghaied on a fishing boat on the Gulf of Thailand). They were boiling a big cauldron of water, and dragging the pig, when its leg got caught behind a pillar, and Teep lost his grip and fell into the boiling water. He had burns on 39 % of his body. We rushed him to the burn unit at the University Hospital in KhonKaen. At first they said he was getting better, but a bad infection set in and Teep died. We brought him home for Masses (three nights, and the funeral on the fourth day, followed by cremation). I blame myself for this; what with the cramped area they worked in and the danger involved working so close to that cauldron of boiling water. We have since built an abattoir that is big and safe, but that doesn't make me feel any better.

A lovely little girl named Gate drowned before Teep's death. She always came to play with our girls, and was very close to us. Her parents had separated, and Gate was staying with her aunt Dtim, who works





in our finance office. Gate went to the fields with her great aunt and the aunt's hyper grandson. The little fellow fell in a fish pond, and Grandma was wandering somewhere on the field. Gate jumped in and rescued the boy, but then drowned while Grandma was hugging and howling over her grandson, ignoring the plight of Gate. By the time some men came to help, Gate was dead, and we had a really pitiful funeral for a lovely little girl. It never should have happened. Another little 13 year old Lao girl, who had been in a bad car accident in Laos when she was 2 years old and had her bladder pierced. Thanks to a doctor in Louisiana, she was able to get enough money for an operation, and after many years, is now able to hold her urine. She will go back to school next year.

We had a big influx of babies and little girls this year. The Thai courts and Welfare Department sent us pregnant girls, 12, 13, 14 years old, who were raped and dumped. The mothers stay with us to feed their babies. One mother has AIDS, so she gave us her baby girl and moved on. We now wait to see if the baby will be infected with HIV/AIDS, or not. The House of Hope has a crop of new babies who now belong to us. We moved boys from Jan & Oscar to the new house in the fields; the Gary & Janet Smith building. Jan & Oscar was then used to house grade school girls. Within months, we picked up 9 new grade school girls; some with AIDS. One little girl, who was 10 when she was raped by her uncle, looked lonely and desolate. My truck was gone, so I gave her a ride from Sarnelli House in Don Wai to Jan & Oscar in Pai Si Tong, in our new golf cart. Duang loved the ride and perked right up, and is now a cheerful, happy child; going to school, with none of the kids or staff knowing what had happened to her. The little girls are all so sweet, but fight like tinkers at the slightest provocation.

A high point to this year was the marriage of our nurse

Kate to Brian, an Irish lad from Cork. We had about 40 guests from Australia and Ireland, and our kids and staff did themselves proud with decorations, reading, singing and a traditional Lao ceremony after the Mass was completed. We are hoping Brian will be able to do the fund raising, Fr. Ole does well in fund raising in Thailand, and stays busy with his soccer teams, male and female. It really adds to the children's happiness. He is also our computer expert. Brother Keng spends his weekends at Khon Kaen University, taking education and development courses for a degree. He helps on Outreach and works with kids on their education prospects.

At the beginning of the year, we had an alarming deficit budget. Thanks to generous donors, we were able to come out in the black at the end of the year. I have repeatedly said that we stagger from pillar to post, trying to keep the good ship Sarnelli afloat. But I told the Lord 16 years ago, that I would do my best at the work, but He had to find people to help us stay solvent. He has kept his side of the bargain. As for me, I find myself sliding down the slippery slope, as my endurance begins to fail, and I have to depend on others to do so many things I can't do anymore. But that is O.K. No one person is greater than the work. We thank Mary, the Mother of Perpetual Help, for looking over her little herd of children and the staff, with her Love and constant Help.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Fathers Mike & Ole; Brother Keng; Kate and Brian, and all the children and staff!

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