

House and Tawp is 13 years old and living at the Gary and Janet Smith House on Jomp's Farm. Both are doing really well at school and consistently get high marks. Kon is now seventeen and she is studying Diet and Nutrition in Nongkhai at a vocational school and she is supported by Sarnelli House to live with 2 other students in a room close to their school. She is a bright, happy girl who is concerned for her brothers' welfare.

There are four more sets of siblings living at Sarnelli House and the chance to keep them together as they grow up and receive an education is imperative. They have a shared history that provides them solace as well as support for their future together. They also have the chance to accept and move on from the losses already evident in their young lives. With the ongoing support of sponsors and benefactors, their lives are enriched and their futures given a promising start.

Every one of these children is a valued part of the rich and complex family at Sarnelli House and there is a commitment to establishing as much contact with what remains of immediate or extended families. For some kids, that contact is in the house, the room or even the bed next to them

Returning to Sarnelli House

The long school holidays are over and the children are back at school – some at the same school, some going on to study at new schools near and far from Nongkhai. Others have chosen to stay on at Sarnelli House and work in the childrens' houses or on the farm. There are now two graduates from Rosario School who have grown up at Sarnelli House, working to care for the nineteen girls living at Jan and Oscar House and three young men living and working on Jomp's Farm.



The girls from Jan and Oscar House with their two new carers.

New Address for
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(The foundation can give
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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, May 2015

Sarnelli House

NEWSLETTER



www.sarnelliorphanage.org



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Message from Fr Shea

My Grandma told me once that time goes by so slow when one gets old. Grandma Mae was blind and deaf in her last years, and relied on her rosary and her memory, instead of newspapers, books, and TV. Well, I am old, and although I am sure the time will come for me to wait for the Angel of death, right now the days and weeks flash by at a dizzying speed.

In this issue of Kate's newsletter, she tells us of siblings given us; a few of these count three or even four family members. Some come as orphans; some come as abandoned children; all come with feelings of hurt, loneliness and desperation. They have no idea of what life here will be like. Some of the boys are bullies, and some of the girls have their cliques which new girls are not especially welcomed. Thank God for sharp eyed staff and no nonsense house mothers, that make sure every child is welcome and no child is treated unkindly. Bullies are punished and cliques of some of the girls are also reprimanded for their lack of charity. 16 years have passed since we began the work of Sarnelli House, and abandoned babies and cast off little children are now teenagers, and some are going to college this year. The older kids who have finished college and moved on, come back to visit, to thank, or, in some cases, they are out of a job, or in some trouble.

We are always here for them. We are their only refuge, the only family they have.

God bless you!

Paying Respect

It is not unusual to have sibling children or cousins living at Sarnelli House. Over the years there have been many – and in April to celebrate the Thai New Year or Songkran, two groups of families came back to show their respect and give thanks to Fr Shea for all that he has done to give them a new life. Two sisters Dtang and Jem who have completed university



and have good jobs working in Bangkok returned to say hello. Cousins Noo and Nan, who were raised at Sarnelli House, now have their own lives. Nan is married with a child and Noo is heading out into the world with her cousin to find work. It was great they could come back to Don Wai and pay their respects to Fr Shea and acknowledge Sarnelli House's role in giving them a start in life, a start they have made the most of.

Siblings

Three brothers who are all living together at Sarnelli House are thriving. The eldest, Q, is 9 years old and he is a bright and clever boy. Then there is the middle boy who is a skinny, wiry, little ball of energy commonly



known as KFC to his friends. Finally, there is 6 year old R, who has just graduated from Kindergarten, has lost his front teeth and is keen to be part of everything and anything that is going on. Previous to coming to Sarnelli House in 2014, the boys lived together with their mother and youngest brother who had brain damage from birth and was unable to walk or talk, needing constant care. The boys' mother is a young woman with little education, who found it hard to find any permanent work in Nongkhai. The fathers of the boys were no longer around and gave no support to the boys' upbringing. They were all living in a run-down house with cement floors, where the walls didn't meet the ceilings, with no windows and only one light bulb in the only room in the house. The house was only available in the first place because it was between rental tenants. The boys' mother tried to find work and would be away for days at a time leaving dried noodles and soft drinks for the boys to eat. Q, the eldest, tried to keep the smaller boys entertained, washed and fed but it was a huge job for anyone, let alone an 8 year old boy. He would sit with his youngest brother on his lap or carry him around on his hip, visiting neighbours, asking for food. The Thai Welfare Department were notified and contacted the Sarnelli House Outreach Program for help. Monthly food was delivered to the family, as well as milk for the boys but they continued to be left on their own for days to weeks. Neither was Q able to attend school. The boys' mother agreed to have the boys come to live at Sarnelli House, while she went to Bangkok to find work. The Welfare Department referred the youngest boy to a government home for disabled children in Bangkok. Unfortunately, the little boy died a few weeks later which was yet another emotional upheaval for Q and his little brothers. Since then, their mother has tried to find work in Bangkok and the latest news was that she was working in a coffee shop. She was able to take some time off and travel back to Sarnelli House in the school holidays in May, where she spent a few days together with her boys. The boys are great fun and have made their own friends but there is a tangible bond between them all with Q looking out for his two younger brothers. They have taken well to living at Sarnelli House where there is enough food, clothes and school every day, as well as abundant friends to play with.

Oop and Oum are sisters who come from a fractured family in the local area. Their father is unable to find work as he has psychiatric problems and their mother left them when they were young. Their aunt took them from the care of their father, who couldn't feed them or clothe them, and contacted the head of the village, who in turn involved the Welfare Department and the girls came to live at Sarnelli House in 2013. Oop lives at Jan and Oscar house with nineteen other little girls from 6 years old to 14 years old and Oum, who is a sweet 4 year old, lives at House of Hope. The two houses are on the same compound in the village of Pi Si Tong and it is lovely to see the sisters together with Oop looking after her younger sister, who, in turn, hangs on her every word. Both girls go to school now and while Oop is the more outgoing and adventurous of the two, their smiles light up their faces when they see each other.



Jasmine and Queen are also sisters, born 15 months apart, from different fathers. They are very close together in age but they have totally different personalities. Their mother was a sex worker living with HIV and she bought Queen to Fr Shea on the back of a motorbike when she was just a 4 month old baby. Queen was dehydrated and very unwell and the mother left very



quickly after dropping her off. Then, a year later, Jasmine was deposited with Fr Shea when she was 2 months old and her mother once again disappeared. Jasmine and Queen are now fourteen and fifteen years old respectively and both go to a very good school in Nongkhai. They are incredibly competitive, in sport and academically and until a year or so ago would fight and refuse to stay in the same house together. However, as they grow older, they seem to be gaining a new respect for each other. Queen is the better sportswoman, enjoying and succeeding in football, volleyball and badminton. Both are impetuous and hot tempered. Jasmine is always planning a scam, laughing and expressing her opinion. She is tall and straight like a bean pole and has exciting and ambitious dreams for her future. Queen hopes to become a sports teacher and no doubt both will succeed at whatever they put their minds to.

One attempt was made to reconnect with their mother a few years back. On the visit to meet their mother, the girls discovered they had a half brother and they met their grandmother as well on the same day. Their mother was visibly upset when she saw the girls but she made no attempt to invite them back into her life or to stay in contact. The girls stayed very quiet and hardly spoke at all during the visit and were united in their opinion to remain at Sarnelli House which they considered

home. They have not at this stage taken any opportunities to develop a stronger relationship with their mother.



Mat, Tawp and Kon all have the same mother but the two boys Mat and Tawp have a different father to their big sister, Kon. When Mat and Tawp's mother died, their father remarried and the new family did not want the two boys from the previous marriage. None of the family members could take care of the boys. An uncle of the three children bought them all to Sarnelli House in 2009 and the children have been here ever since. Not long after the boys and Kon moved here, their father came asking to take them back home, but it turned out that he had made an arrangement to sell them to a lady in Sweden. Their uncle was contacted as were the police, and the father was forced to give up his plan of selling the boys and is now not allowed access to them at all. Mat is 12 years old and living at Sarnelli

