

The Powerhouse of St Patrick's Boys Home

BM is almost 16 years old and has lived at St Patrick's Boys Home since he was 7 years old. There is no history of where he came from and how he spent his early years, or even what his real age is. He was abandoned by his father and was found scavenging for food and living where he could find shelter. Now, he is one of the biggest and strongest boys at St Patrick's. He would much prefer to be outdoors hunting and exploring than being at school, this year however he is in his final year at Rosario School much to his relief. When he is not in school he can be found hunting with his slingshot for small



animals and birds. BM is light on his feet when he needs to be and is currently the reigning champ at table tennis in Pi Si Tong. When it comes to work he is always the first to take on the tough job of ploughing and can manoeuvre the plough like a pro, while the lighter weight boys literally hang off the end as they make a turn. BM is willing to do the hard work and is quickly growing into a responsible, young man that the other boys look up to. The little kids from House of Hope give him a wide berth at first, until they find out he is not half as mean as he looks.



WE NEED YOUR HELP..

.....to ensure that the work these kids are doing will not be in vain. To help them to help themselves, and to nurture a generation of young people able and willing to work for their futures.

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 For more donation details see www.sarnelliorphanage.org under Support
 Postal Address: Sarnelli House, PO Box 61, Nongkhai, Thailand 43000.

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Written by Kate Introna, September 2010

Sarnelli House

“Kids Helping Themselves”

Message from Fr Mike Shea



Back in early 1999, when I began looking for staff and also for land to build Sarnelli House, the only village that would harbor children who had HIV/AIDS (at that time) was the tiny hamlet of Don Wai, which had maybe 50 houses.

We had no possibility of getting ownership papers, so two rai (one acre) plots were therefore cheap and plentiful. With the help of kind and generous donors, I was able to buy land for Sarnelli House, Nazareth House, the clinic and also Charlene Richard guest house, plus my house/office. Also to the east and south of Don Wai, orchard land, garden land and rice paddies were for sale legally. This land now belongs to Sarnelli House and is host to orchards; fish ponds, and over 30 acres of rice paddy. Almost all of our kids are from rural areas, and I have a fine staff of men and young women who are like older siblings to the boys and girls and patiently teach them all the tasks of this bucolic life. This Saturday the older kids will be repairing roads; digging ditches and burying drain pipes to the fields. The younger kids will be pulling weeds in the paddies. Over 60 years ago, my father Johnny Bill would send my brother Jack and I out to dig up bull thistles and pull up mustard weed in the grain fields. He would pay us according to the amount we pulled and dug up. This carrot and stick approach works wonderfully well in Thailand as well! Work + money = the mall at vacation time in October.

In this issue, Kate explains the work the children do to help themselves. We dare not just sit around with our hands out, whining for help!!

God Bless you all

Fr Mike Shea C.S.s.R



Animal Care

The bigger boys from the St Patrick's Boys Home and the Jan and Oscar House are responsible for feeding the livestock, most of which is located at Pi Si Tong on the St Patrick's grounds. The pigs need to be fed with the slops from the kitchens. 3 new litters of pigs and their big fat mamas have recently been purchased. Of the 3 litters of piglets only 2 died and the others have now been moved to the new pigpens to grow big and fat and to eventually feed some of the 165 children living in the 6 houses that make up Sarnelli House.

The new chicken coop at St Patrick's is home to chickens and ducks, and the boys collect eggs and keep the birds well supplied with water and feed. The



boys also grow fish in the 2 fish ponds located at St Patrick's. They enthusiastically climb down into the muddy brown water and trawl a net across the pond, trying to capture fish that splash and jump, knowing their end is near. Eventually the chickens, ducks, pigs and fish will be used by Mrs Wan to cook up some spicy Thai meals for the boys.

At Nazareth House the girls also have chickens and ducks that need looking after. Every day after school, one of the girls is rostered on to feed and water the chickens and ducks for a month at a time, then it is time for the next girls turn.



Maintaining the Buildings

In the school holidays the bigger boys help out with repainting the older buildings and painting any new buildings. These last school holidays in April the boys from St Patrick's got to work stripping the paint from their house which is almost 10 years old and repainting it. It was hard work in the heat but they got up early every morning until the job was complete.

Drinking Water Distribution

In Thailand the tap water is not fit for drinking, so an alternate source of water must be found. Most people have no choice but to buy water even though this can be costly. At Sarnelli House there is a water distiller where the water pumped from the well passes through two purifiers before it is drinkable. This water is decanted into big plastic containers and delivered to the 5 houses, where the empty containers are swapped for the full ones. On the weekends and in the afternoons after school boys go along in the back of the pick up truck and load up the full containers of water and unload them again at all the houses. This is an essential job and one that can't be forgotten and the boys are aware of their responsibilities and share the load between St Patrick's boys and the boys from the Jan and Oscar House

Making it Naturally

The Manager of House of Hope - Ms Peh attended a week long training seminar in Rayong near Bangkok last year to learn how to make cleaning products from natural Thai ingredients and thereby eliminate the use of chemicals. Twice a month on a Saturday she organizes the bigger kids from the Jan and Oscar House, St Patrick's House and Nazareth House to come over to Pi Si Tong and help with preparing the ingredients that are used, such as limes, pineapples and tamarind. Together the kids mix the ingredients in large plastic bowls, then add them all together according to the recipe and stir them in big containers using long bamboo poles. Their arms get tired as the mixture slowly thickens, but they talk and tease each other and make it a fun time. The mixture is then poured into clean used containers and distributed to the separate houses. The kids help to make floor cleaning fluid, soap, shower gel and laundry detergent.



Rice Planting and Harvesting

Every year more rice land is needed to sufficiently feed all the children with enough rice for 3 meals a day. With 165 children living at Sarnelli House plus 50 staff, approximately 600 meals a day are needed when everyone is home, and the staple of all 3 meals is rice. The land needs to be prepared for rice planting which means plowing the fields to loosen the earth and allow the rain to soak through and fill the paddies. This is done with a Kubota Garden tractor. BM from St Patrick's the biggest and heaviest boy usually takes the lead. Over the course of a number of weekends the boys head out and spend all day taking it in turns plowing the the fields. When the conditions are right and there is sufficient water in the paddies the kids from all the houses, all the staff and willing villagers come to help plant the rice. At over 3 different locations in the village of Don Wai and Pi Si Tong rice is planted. It is hard work - up to your knees in mud in the hot humid weather, bending all day to anchor the rice plants firmly in the mud where they can take root. Lunch is bought along in the back of the truck and Tanee from the Jan and Oscar House will usually



provide the music and be the resident DJ. The rice is planted over about 6 weekends - rain or shine.

120 days later the rice has ripened and is now a rich golden colour. Harvest time begins, and the kids' work starts again. The rice is cut by hand, and the girls from Viengkhuuk do a great job wielding the scythe. It is then bundled and tied up. A truck follows by as the kids load the bundles of rice onto the truck. A rice separator is hired and parked at St Patrick's, and the staff during the week, put the rice bundles through the machine and collect the separated rice into bags to take to the mill for polishing and removing the husks. The stalks and chaff are kept to feed the livestock. This year with generous donations from Ben and Angelique Ummels and Leon and Henriette Castermans www.vriendenvansarnelli.nl we have purchased our first mechanical rice planter and from the Ananda Foundation our own Rice Mill so the costs of delivering the rice to the children's plates are reduced.

Jewellery Making

The girls at Our Lady of Refuge Home for Girls at Viengkhuuk raise money for Sarnelli House by making costume jewellery. They spend their afternoons, after doing their homework making jewellery, key rings and rosaries. Using their own imagination or referring to a book, they intricately thread tiny beads of different colours and sizes and knot them off in all sorts of different patterns. The girls are proud of their work and happy to show it off to visitors, and they know they are contributing to their own livelihood and futures.

