

March 2010: News from Baan Tharn Namchai

Orphanage has new cultural centre

Last month a new cultural centre was being built at the Baan Tharn Namchai children's home for tsunami victims. The building is built with walls using an earth and straw construction technique. A community group from Nakhon Ratchasima in the Northeast of the country travelled to Phang-nga to give instruction in how to construct earth buildings. The construction costs have been sponsored by the Siam Solvay Foundation.

With construction proceeding well, four representatives of Solvay Asia Pacific Co., Ltd. led by the president Mr. Roger Kearns visited Baan Tharn Namchai to help with the work. The visitors were welcomed to Baan Tharn Namchai by Duang Prateep Foundation chairperson Prateep Ungsongtham Hata and orphanage director Ms. Rotjana Phraesrithong. The group from Solvay were first entertained by dance performances from the children. Then everyone changed clothes and got dirty mixing straw and mud before smearing the mixture on straw bales to create waterproof and environmentally friendly walls. After the work on the walls, the visitors inspected the hydroponic vegetables centre and other facilities before departing.



The photo shows Roger Kearns back centre, with his three colleagues to his right. Prateep is back left. Rotjana is back third from the right. Also in the photograph are some of the staff and children at the orphanage. The group were photographed after working on the mud walls.

Visiting Baan Tharn Namchai to help with earth house construction on another day was a group of 20 people from the Grassroots Foundation, a local NGO which particularly works helping Burmese migrants to the area.

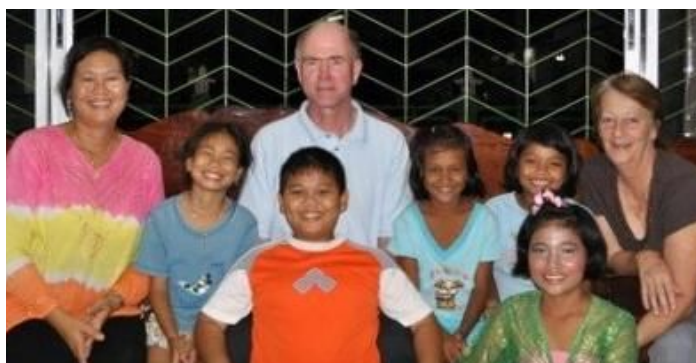
As construction has proceeded many locals have been visiting Baan Tharn Namchai to learn about how to make earth buildings. Hotels and other companies are interested in the possibility of building earth houses on their premises.

Thai Children's Trust visit

Another important visitor in February was Mr. Crispin Collins, the chairman of the Thai Children's Trust. Mr Collins made his first visit to Baan Tharn Namchai.

The photo left shows Crispin Collins, centre, Rotjana Phraesrithong, left, and colleague Allyson Parker, right, with some of the orphanage children.

Over a two day stay, Mr. Collins



talked to children at the orphanage. He also visited the village of Baan Nam Khem and the DPF children's centre at Baan iTV. He also had time for some sightseeing in Phang-nga Bay, visiting James Bond Island.

The Thai Children's Trust is the largest fund-raiser for Thai charities in the UK and makes monthly donations to the Duang Prateep Foundation to help Baan Tharn Namchai with some of the regular living costs.

Other visitors

Other visitors in February included two representatives of Ohanashi Caravan puppet troupe of Japan. Orphanage director Rotjana Phraesrithong trained with Ohanashi Caravan in 1984 and 1994. It is her experiences with the Japanese troupe which motivated Rotjana to found Nithan Caravan puppet troop in Bangkok and later, after the tsunami, also in Phang-nga.

Other visitors at the end of the month included two students from Victoria University in Melbourne who are helping Baan Tharn Namchai puppeteers with performances. Also arriving from Australia at the end of the month were two hairdressers who will be training children and staff in hairdressing during March. There will be more information about the puppeteers and hairdressers from Australia in the April DPF newsletter.

With February being a tourist high season, especially for Europeans escaping their Winter, there were many other visitors to Baan Tharn Namchai during last month. Local hotels such as Le Meridien, the Sarojin and the Andaburi have recommended their guests to visit the orphanage. The families and groups visiting from many countries have often been able to enjoy children's dance performances at the orphanage. Not all the visitors have come from abroad, there have also been locals, either expatriates in the area or Thais, who have dropped by to give their support.

Dance performances

The children at the orphanage continue to be much in demand as traditional Thai dancers at special events and hotels in the area. A highlight in February was dance performances at the dedication ceremony for a new pavilion at the Baan Bang Muang temple in Takua Pa District of Phang-nga Province (photo below). The children also visited the Andaburi Hotel for dance performances one evening.



Aids training

With year end exams looming for students in March, there were not many special activities at the weekends in February. However, on the last Saturday of the month, twenty of the older children at the orphanage attended a one-day HIV/Aids awareness course organised by the Phang-nga Aids in Communities Protection office. The event took place at the Bangnaisri Local Administration in Takua Pa District.