

April 2010: News from Baan Tharn Namchai

Baan Nam Khem building work starts

Last month a ceremony to appease the spirits of the land took place at the site of the Duang Prateep Foundation's new building in the village of Baan Nam Khem (photo right).

The building is sponsored by Hands Across the Water Australia and by UK donors organised by Mr. Bob Wolff. The new building will be multi-purpose in use, providing a nursery school for the youngest children, a youth and community centre and a tsunami escape centre.

The building will also have bedrooms for rent which will be used to generate income and provide employment. Construction on the building has now started and is expected to be finished early next year.

The village of Baan Nam Khem was the worst hit in Thailand by the Indian Ocean tsunami. Many of the children living at the Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage at Phru Teaw village, hail originally from Baan Nam Khem.



Art competition for child tsunami victims

Last month the Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage was visited by Willie Gregg, the founder and organiser of Willie's Orphans Fund, the Northern Ireland based charity organisation which raises funds to help support the child victims of the tsunami in the care of the Duang Prateep Foundation.

The highlight of Willie's two-day visit to the orphanage was an art competition for which he presented the prizes. Taking part in the competition were children at Baan Tharn Namchai and also the Duang Prateep Foundation's after school and weekend activity centre for children at Baan iTV. Willie was helped by his friend Steph in judging the competition and handing out prizes. The art work has now been taken back to Northern Ireland, where it will go on display at several locations.



The photo shows Willie and Steph judging the art competition.

Willie's Orphans Fund is sponsoring the education of forty local children, some of the children live in the care of the DPF at Baan Tharn Namchai, while others are local children needing

and deserving of support for their education. Willie was able to meet most of the children his organisation sponsors.

Willie's fund has financed the purchase of many of the plants at the orphanage and also pays the wages of the gardener. During his visit, Willie was also able to arrange new glasses for the gardener, who was struggling with cracked lenses before.

The photo right shows Laan the gardener with his new glasses.

Willie Gregg was just one of many visitors to the orphanage in March.

Two hairdressers from Sydney, Doug and Lynn, used their professional skills to support the work at the orphanage during a two week visit.



The photo shows Doug in action at the orphanage

Teachers from Australia have also been visiting Baan Tharn Namchai, their visits were arranged through Hands Across the Water in conjunction with Victoria

University. In February and early March, Kirsty and Barbara were teaching at Ban Bang Muang school, where they were helping with kindergarten and primary grade four classes. Their departure was followed by the arrival of Rachel and Kira who were giving puppet performances for children at the local school during their two week stay (photo right).



Another recent arrival through Hands Across the Water was Fiona from Scotland via Australia. Fiona is at the orphanage for one month, teaching English and helping with care of the children during their school vacation.

Other March visitors included a group of managers from the Thai Orchid restaurant and hotel chain in the UK. The managers came from the Thai Orchid houses which had raised the most funds for Baan Tharn Namchai. The Thai Orchid group paid for the football field at the orphanage. While at Baan Tharn Namchai the Thai Orchid managers and children together built a wigwam out of straw and mud.

Apart from the visitors mentioned above there were several other Thai and foreign visitors who dropped by the orphanage. The visitors often brought some snack treats or treated the children to ice cream or sweets. In return, the children often entertained their visitors with dance performances.

Mushroom growing at orphanage

Last month six children and two staff members made a three day trip to the Duang Prateep Foundation's New Life Project to learn about mushroom cultivation. The group brought mushroom spores back with them, which have been placed in a new mushroom house. The orphanage residents expect to be harvesting their own mushrooms within a few weeks.

Also last month staff and children were busy preparing a new site for growing orchids, with the old orchid farm being developed as a rice growing area.



Ten of the children and orphanage director Rotjana Phraesrithong attended a four day meditation course at a temple in Takua Pha town, near the orphanage (photo left).

The event was part of a nationwide initiative to get 500,000 people meditating.

All of the children at the orphanage benefited from free dental check-ups and treatment during March, with the special service being provided by dentists from Takua Pha hospital (photo right).

The puppet troupe based at the orphanage was on the road last month, as they went to Ubon Ratchathani in Northeast Thailand for a week of performing and training local teachers. 120 teachers from schools in the province trained with Nithan Caravan in the use of puppets and story aprons in their work. The teachers were also presented with kits to help them use alternative media in their teaching.

