

May 2010: News from Baan Tharn Namchai

Busy holiday programme at tsunami orphanage

With schools closed throughout the month of April, it has been a busy period for staff at the Duang Prateep Foundation's Baan Tharn Namchai home for child victims of the December 2004 Indian ocean tsunami.

Trip to central region

A highlight of the month was a four-day trip, sponsored by Hands Across the Water, which was enjoyed by eighty children aged from three to eighteen, both from the orphanage and the village of Baan iTV. The children were accompanied by twenty staff and volunteers on the outing to the central region provinces of Ayutthaya and Suphan Buri. In Ayutthaya province the group visited several historic temples in and around the provincial town and former Thai capital. In Suphan Buri province, the group visited a water buffalo conservation centre and the Suphanburi aquarium.

Dance course

Starting after the Thai New Year, fifteen youngsters from the orphanage have started a



month-long course in *Manora* dancing, a traditional dance form in the south of Thailand. The students are learning this demanding dance form for an hour every day until the start of the new school year in the middle of May. The teacher comes from nearby Ratchprachanukroh school. *The photo shows the teacher in the foreground leading the children from the orphanage.*

Meditation and novice monks

Several of the older girls at the project took part in a meditation festival hosted by Baan Tharn Namchai. Thirty-six girls from the orphanage as well as four staff members and a volunteer were joined by others from the local community in the ten-day programme of activities.



The programme included meditation sessions and instruction at



Baan Tharn Namchai, as well as visits to local temples, beaches and waterfalls, where meditation sessions also took place. The highlight of the event was a trip to the enormous Dhammakaya Temple in Pathum Thani province near Bangkok, where the group joined thousands of others in events to mark Earth Day (see photo above).

Also last month six boys from the orphanage became novices at the local temple for two weeks (photo left).

Visitors

Visitors in May included Bob Wolff from County Durham in the UK who has fund raised for Baan Tharn Namchai since soon after the tsunami disaster.

Bob was able to raise funds for the purchase of land where the Duang Prateep Foundation is now constructing a Tsunami Refuge and Youth Centre in the village of Baan Nam Khem.

Bob was accompanied by five friends on his visit. The group was welcomed by dance performances by the children and were able to inspect activities at the orphanage.

The following week Kay Spencer, a trustee of Hands Across the Water (Australia), visited the orphanage to discuss progress on the new building at Baan Nam Khem and meet staff and children. By coincidence Kay's visit was the same day as the visit of 30 people from Australia arranged through Hands Across the Water. The visitors were welcomed with dance performances before having lunch with the children and touring the orphanage.

At the end of the month, the orphanage welcomed the arrival of Steve and Lyn Gilbert to volunteer at the orphanage for two months, a placement arranged through hands Across the Water. The same day as Steve and Lyn arrived, the orphanage was also visited by Sabrina Tan from the Buddhist Fellowship of Singapore and two friends. Sabrina volunteered at the orphanage for several months during 2008. Sabrina and her friends joined in activities with the children.

Farm and building work

At the beginning of April the children and staff were working on finishing the earthen building which has been constructed over recent months. The orphanage was visited by an instructor from Nakhon Ratchasima in northeast Thailand, who taught how to obtain a uniform colour for the final layer of earth on the building and how to apply that final outer layer to leave a smooth finished surface (photo right).

The earth building is now finished and will be used as a drama, exhibition and cultural centre, for children and staff at the orphanage, for the local community and visiting groups.

Later in the month, the children and staff were busy one day preparing land for rice planting. Approximately 400 square metres at the orphanage has now been planted with rice (photo below).



In the middle of the month orphanage director Rotjana Phraesrithong and 65 children from the orphanage visited Wat Kommaneeyakheth school in Takua Pa district to join the school's hundredth anniversary celebrations.

