

House of Blessing Daycare Center 2006 Annual Report

The House of Blessing Daycare (HOB) celebrated five years of service in July, 2006. Targeting primarily two urban slum communities, a total of 153 children have attended the daycare in the past five years, with 85 graduating and continuing their education. (Over half of the graduates are receiving some continuing scholarship assistance from the HOB. Also, it should be noted that because of the the transitory nature of this population, about 15% of the children attending the daycare move, and the HOB isn't able to follow whether they are staying in school or not.). This past May, at the beginning of the Thai school year, 100% of the parents were able to register their HOB graduates into Thai schools on their own, a testament to the past help and training given by the daycare teachers. The HOB has also continued to provide a way for the HPTP staff to work with families in these two communities, teaching about health care and parenting issues.

2006 saw yet another move for the HOB, the 4th time in five years. The new location is closer to the Health Project office, but is smaller in both classroom size and yard space. The hope is to continuing renting this space until new facilities are available with the House of Love, a sister project planning on building this year.



Students: A total of 60 children attended the center over the past twelve months. Twenty-nine children left the center this year, twenty-three are continuing their studies and twelve are receiving scholarships from the center. These twelve are also being followed with visits to their homes and schools on a regular basis. Another twenty-four children, who graduated in previous years, continue to be followed by the center's staff and receive scholarships. Some children have left the center because their families had to move out of the community in order to find work. Nineteen new children were accepted in May at the beginning of the new school year, and began studies with the children who had studied at the center the previous term. Many of these new

children did not speak Thai and, therefore, needed special attention so that they could learn a new language. Presently there are 31 students attending the center – eleven Akha, seventeen Lahu, two Lisu, and one Palaung.

Volunteers and Visitors: The 3 tribal teachers at the HOB welcomed outside teaching help from volunteers who committed to teach the children on a regular basis. Volunteers who have served at the HOB in 2006 include four student interns from universities in the States who have helped to teach English. There were three other volunteers, one from Norway, one from Japan, and one from Italy.

Visitors are also an enjoyable addition to the school day. Visitors were received at the HOB on fifteen occasions in 2006, for a total of 80 visitors. The children introduced themselves in English and performed songs for each set of visitors. Usually, there would be time to play together outside, and both HOB students and guests enjoyed the interaction. Visitors have come from Australia, England, Japan, Sweden, Norway, India, Burma, Laos, and America. The center also received guests from Thai and International Rotary Clubs.

Special Activities: Special activities have also livened up the school year. The children went on a field trip sponsored by Mae Jo University where they learned about nature. Students from a local international school (GIS) planned a day-long field trip to a waterfall—getting wet and being showered with attention made for a fun time. GIS students also had special

programs at both Easter and Christmas for the daycare students. Games, singing, cookie decorating, and learning about Jesus highlighted both events. Finally, a Christmas Homecoming was held in Dec. They celebrated Christmas with most of their parents and some of their siblings. There were a total of 162 people in attendance. Some of the children who had graduated from the center came back for the celebration. They performed and the graduates with the best grades were recognized. The day care children performed and sang songs. A drama group came and put on a participatory drama teaching about tourism and the sexual exploitation of children. There was also a worship service. Each child attending the center received a gift and a new outfit to wear. All others received a small gift. Lunch was served to all who attended.



Home Visitation: A total of thirty-nine visits were made to the homes of the students by the center staff for the following reasons:

- Ø Visit families of the students
- Ø To make a date for a meeting or to give information to the parents
- Ø Visit scholarship students in their homes as well as at their schools
- Ø Follow-up children who receive sponsorship from other organizations
- Ø To take visitors to visit the urban communities
- Ø Meeting with parents
- Ø To give scholarship money to the schools
- Ø To receive registration for new students
- Ø Visit children who miss school
- Ø To visit students who are ill
- Ø To help children obtain citizenship

Meetings with Parents: After the Christmas party, the teachers and the administrative staff of the Health Project for Tribal People met together with 30 parents (representing all the ethnic groups). Teachers at the center told the parents of the importance of regular attendance at the center and of the need to encourage the children to do their homework. Teachers also explained the rules of the center and schedule for the school year. All of this must be done orally as some of the parents are illiterate. Most parents show an interest in the center and in the progress of their children. Parents have begun to see that they can make choices for the welfare of their children as well as realize the importance of their involvement of the care of their own children. The parents made several requests, including providing temporary shelter for their children, increasing the number of students at the daycare, and expanding to start a hostel and give scholarships for their older children. Besides the requests, the parents also expressed their appreciation for the center and for the improvement in the lives of their children.

Staff Development: The Day Care staff has attended seminars on the following subjects:

- AIDS Competency
- How to use educational materials and appropriate teaching methods
- Children's rights and the laws protecting children
- Proper use of antiretroviral drugs
- Tourism and the sexual exploitation of children

- Child abuse
- How to teach sexual morality to youth in the context of AIDS
- Project planning and management
- How to write a proposal and budget
- Participatory methods in community development

Successes

- The center provides a safe place for children to study who otherwise would not have the opportunity to go to school. Thirty-six graduates are being followed with scholarships and regular visits. Their teachers are reporting that they are getting better grades, adjusting to the school environment and other children, and are keeping their selves cleaner. The attitudes of the teachers have changed towards the children from the slums and it has been easier to register children who do not have proper documentation.
- The HOB has been encouraged and blessed by equipment (including new computers) from Rotary International, and by operational support given by Xenos.
- Provision of scholarships for needy children allows children to remain in school. Parents are paying half of all school costs. Parents are more active in providing educational opportunities for their children.
- More parents are able to find work and provide for their families because their children are being cared for during the day.
- Children are in a stable environment where they are learning life skills and how to make good decisions concerning their own behavior
- The nutritional status and health of the children are improving
- The children are learning how to make good moral decisions
- Children are developing, learning Thai, staying cleaner, and learning how to relate to others so that they are being accepted by the wider society
- Children are learning English from native English speakers
- Parents are now interested in having their children study and are giving financial support towards the cost of schooling. They are also able to register the children in school without the assistance of the Day Care staff and are relating better to the teachers of local government schools.
- Parents are showing more interest in their children and are attending meetings and special activities sponsored by the Day Care Center. There are fewer requests for the center to house children on a permanent basis.
- Parents are learning the importance of citizenship for their children
- The parents have learned more about their own rights and the rights of children. They also have a better understanding of Thai labor laws concerning children.
- The there are decreased risk factors in the life of the children.
- Parents trust the day care staff and come to them for consultation about their problems.



Future Plans and Needs

Future plans include:

- Coordinate with local schools so that the older children are able to continue their education
- Provide scholarships on a limited basis for older children as they graduate from the center
- Provide more training seminars for parents
- Continue follow-up of students who have left or graduated from the center. Help the parents know how to contact schools and relate to teachers on their own.
- Continue training and capacity building for teachers and other staff

Needs include:

- The teachers see a need for the center to continue, a male teacher to be a positive male role model, a home for emergency cases and orphans, and English instruction for the staff. Other needs identified by the staff are on-going funds for scholarships, health, and citizenship issues, a new building for the day care, and funds for continuing education for the staff.
- Regular funding sources need to be secured.

Stories of Children

Malee is a seven-year old Lahu girl who is studying in kindergarten 3. She is the oldest of three children. She lives with her parents and two younger brothers. Malee must work to help support her family by selling flowers on the street and in restaurants during the evening and night. She does not get enough rest and often falls asleep at the center. She must work because her father does not have Thai citizenship and can not find a job. When he looks for a job, no one will hire him and he must run from the police. He has no education or job skills. He is able to buy flowers and make them into wreaths to wear around the neck. He then has his daughter go to sell them. If an adult tries to sell the flowers, no one is interested in buying them. More flowers are sold when Malee is the one selling them, but this is against the law. The police are beginning arrest children who are illegally selling flowers, but Malee has no choice if the family wants to eat and have a future. Malee is a good child who works hard at her studies. She does not want to sell flowers but knows that it is the only source of income for her family.

Surasak is a five-year old Lahu boy who is studying in kindergarten 2. His father is in jail for using drugs and his mother has begun to live with another man. Surasak and his mother sell flowers on the road. Many times he and his mother have been arrested because his mother has no Thai identification card. His stepfather looks for daily work. His salary is small and his work is unsure because he has no education. He is unable to find a good job. Surasak must look for a way to help his family.



Morning lessons at the House of Blessing