

# Leadership Matters!

## Opening of Orphanage

**Peter Baines**



One of the messages that I hope to leave my audience with following a keynote presentation is the importance of having a clarity of purpose. I have a strong belief which has been reinforced time and time again that if there is congruence between those working towards achieving an outcome as to what the desired outcome is and how it will be achieved then the likelihood of success is so much higher.

### **The return to Thailand**

At end of August I returned to Thailand for the first time since leaving 12 months ago when I was there leading teams in the identification of the many thousands of victims following the Boxing Day tsunami. I returned for a very different reason this time which was equally as humbling as my previous tours but this tour was more self indulgent than any other.

I returned to Thailand for the official opening of the Baan Tharn Namchai Orphanage. This is the orphanage and the reason that Hands Across the Water was formed. I founded Hands Across the Water with my colleague and very dear friend Gill Williams from the UK Police because in October of 2005, some ten months on from the Tsunami, we came across 32 children ranging in age from 2 years to 15 years who were living in large tents. The scary thing was that nobody was doing anything significant towards changing where these kids would live and so we set about changing that.

# Orphanage Opens!

## Live the Journey

We set a very simple charter for Hands Across the Water - raise money and lots of it so that we could build a home for these little kids who had lost so, so much. In raising the money I wanted to share with people a few of the special moments and learnings along the way that I had during my tours of Thailand. Rather than simply asking for donations I wanted to share the reason why I was raising the money and why this cause was so important to me. I believed that if I could convey the story with sufficient clarity that I would create that congruence between myself and those who wanted to be involved. Rather than people feeling they were supporting me, they would know they were supporting the children of the Ban Nam Khem region whose struggle has just begun.

## Fight has just Begun

Attending the orphanage for the official opening, I met with the children, toured the premises and shared an intimate conversation with Dr. Sunyarat Ratjatawan. Dr. Sunyarat is a Thai national who left Thailand at the age of four and spent the next 34 years in the USA. During this time he graduated university and practiced as a Psychologist. Eleven months ago he left the USA and his successful practice to work in the village of Ban Nam Khem, and in particular the Orphanage, treating the children for their

many physical and psychological injuries that they deal with on a daily basis. He explained that many of the children suffer from problems such as separation disorder, survivor guilt, post traumatic stress disorder and aquaphobia (a fear of water). When the monsoon rains come many of the children, previously of fishing families, now hide in fear.

Hearing the stories, meeting the kids like the little guy here Ung who is only two years of age who lost his mum and dad, or meeting a young girl who lost 17 members of her family yes 17 members! I am very clear of what the future is for Hands Across the Water and what the needs are for the kids.

## Immediate Needs of the Kids

So what are the needs of the kids right now? Well their needs are varied and as basic as mosquito repellent, school shoes, bedding, toys, band aids and soccer balls! They need just what our kids need and usually have without any great thought. The orphanage needs another fridge and it needs a swimming pool so these kids can start to be reintroduced back into the water.

So many of you reading this newsletter have contributed in a very generous way to what has already been achieved. But of course there is so much more to do - there always will be. It costs about \$100 AUD per month to support each of the children who

reside full time at the orphanage and approximately \$30 AUD per month to support the other 200 children who use the facilities over the week.

## Continued Help

If you would like to once again contribute in a financial way, please follow the links on my website, give me a call direct with your credit card details (0438 145219), or post a cheque to the address below. If you would like to support Hands Across the Water in the running of a fund raising event or in some other way please get in contact with me. If you happen to be traveling through Singapore or Bangkok and have the time to divert down to Phuket, invest the \$50 on an airfare and visit the orphanage yourself, it truly is an amazing place.

I feel proud and honoured to have been part of the construction of the Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage. Now we have built the first of our orphanages, we will work towards the building of the next one - a larger home in a neighbouring village for another 50 children who to this day don't have a proper home, having also lost parents, siblings and extended family members.

My clarity of purpose as to why I do what I do is crystal clear. I know that having this clarity is just one part of understanding that Leadership Matters.