



ASEAN Education Center becomes a reality for migrant children

Pattaya Mail, November 25, 2016, by Paul Strachan,

A new facility specifically designed for the children of migrant workers was opened on Thursday the 17th of November. The ASEAN Education Center is a new addition to the existing Day Care Center which comes under the care of the Human Help Network (HHN) and will help educate children of migrant workers from Cambodia and Myanmar working in the building sector.



Heinz Minten entertains the children with a hilarious magic show.

Teachers from Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand will instruct up to 100 children in their native language according to curriculums designed by the Cambodian Education Ministry and Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee.

Martin Brands, Charter President of the Rotary Club Eastern Seaboard (RCES) is the manager of the Rotary project for the new center. With the HHN center Director Radchada "Toy" Chomjinda he welcomed the guests and sponsors.

The need for the new facility came to light some 2 years ago when HHN staff found migrant kids collecting garbage, playing in dangerous construction sites and some were involved in petty crime such as pick-pocketing.

Renee de Vaan-Goosen joins a girl from the Child Development and Protection Center during her rendition of 'You raise me up'.

Up to that time, the Sanuk Day Care Center provided a facility for some of these children; however, due to lack of funding it had to close. This is when HHN stepped in.

The first solution was to seek the cooperation from a landowner to use a plot in Jomtien as a meeting point for the children, where they received basic education from the HHN team. Soon after, HHN decided to move them to their Drop-In Center that was under construction.



Meanwhile, Martin Brands was working hard to get the cooperation of the Rotary Foundation and other sponsors to raise the

3.5 million to make the ASEAN Education Center a reality.



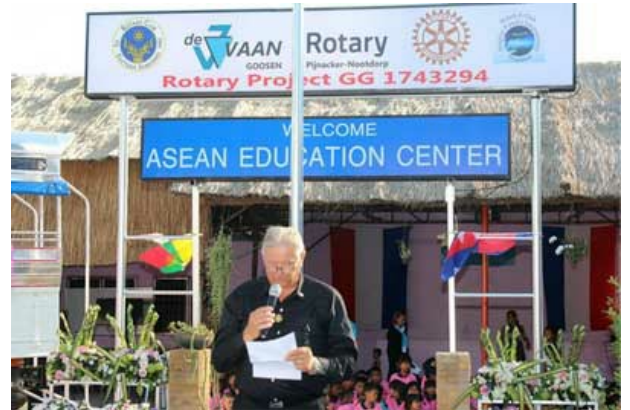
Sponsor Jan de Vaan thanks everybody for their efforts.

Generous sponsorship soon came from Jan & Renee de Vaan and the Rotary Pijnacker-Nootdorp in the Netherlands, and the Rotary Clubs of Dolphin Pattaya International and Eastern Seaboard in Thailand. After a lengthy and stringent application process to also obtain a significant grant from the Rotary Foundation, the project was approved and the funds were received in October. The new center focuses on education and community development.

Aad Scholtes who is a member of Rotary Pijnacker-Nootdorp and RCES delivers a message from the President of Rotary Pijnacker-Nootdorp.

The funds paid for classroom facilities, books, computers and a bus to ferry the children from and back to the construction camps, and of course the salaries for the teachers and bus driver.

Martin Brands outlined that this was a soft opening and that the official opening will take place next year with the Dutch Ambassador in attendance. Martin and Toy also welcomed many guests of honour, including Jan & Renee de Vaan, Dr Otmar Deter, charter president of the Rotary Club Dolphin Pattaya International, Aad Scholtes, member of Rotary Pijnacker-Nootdorp and RCES, Past District Governor Peter Malhotra, Elfi Seitz, HHN Director Sopin Thappajug, and the President of RCES, Rodney Charman, who has been working with his fellow Rotarians on this project.



The entire team responsible for the fund raising for the new center.

Over 80 children were present during the opening and sang beautiful versions of 'Tulips from Amsterdam' and 'You raise me up' as well as traditional Cambodian and Burmese songs. The children were also entertained with a superb magic show provided by Heinz Minten.



The children sing and dance to the classic song 'Tulips from Amsterdam'.

It is estimated that Pattaya has approximately 2000 migrant children and up to 400,000 nationwide. The total migrant worker population in Thailand is at least 3 million of which so far 1.5 million have obtained proper ID cards and work papers.

Eventually the migrant children will return to their home countries. In the meantime, the ASEAN Education Center will provide them education to ensure a better future. 100 is a drop in the ocean but it's a start, and without the work of NGO's such as HHN and Rotary and generous benefactors, the children would be running about the streets of Pattaya and perhaps turning to a life of crime.



The children join the sponsors, Rotarians and teachers for a group photo.

