

THAILAND Couple find personal mission among Thailand's poor

September 14, 2009 | TH07904.1567 | 704 words Text size [-](#) [+](#)

BELFAST, UK (UCAN) -- When children grow up and move out of the house "empty nesters" often take an extended holiday.



People assisted by Kate's Project Trust.
 Photo courtesy of Kate's Project website.

For Roisin and Andrew McCarroll from Northern Ireland that wasn't enough. They prayed for guidance and were called, as was said of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata, to do "something beautiful for God."

After their daughter was married three years ago, the couple planned an extended pilgrimage to Marian shrines in Europe but found themselves in eastern Thailand instead.

As regular Mass goes at the Redemptorist monastery in Clonard, Belfast, they heard of the work of Father Ray Brennan among the dispossessed of Pattaya, the seaside resort town 160 kilometers southeast of the Thai capital, Bangkok.

Father Brennan, a Redemptorist missionary from Chicago, arrived in Pattaya in 1970 as a temporary replacement for the parish priest. But shortly after his arrival, a woman handed him an unwanted baby, the start of his Pattaya Orphanage and Father Brennan was to remain committed to the place for the rest of his life until he died six years ago.

Roisin, the manager of a dental practice and Andrew, a teacher, knew this was the work they wanted to do, sold their house and possessions and left to work as volunteers for a year in the orphanage now run by the Father Ray Foundation.

"The foundation does an amazing job - with an orphanage, and schools for the deaf, blind and otherwise disabled," said Roisin, speaking to UCA News in Belfast. "But I have always tried to follow the principle of Mahatma Gandhi, 'Be the change you want to see in the world' and after only a week I felt there must be a better use of my time.

"I started going into the streets with a Thai who had befriended us, Kongjit Peurndonkeng, who we know as Khun Noi, and we met many young street children, hungry for a few baht for food and prey for human traffickers and pedophiles."

But it was not until Roisin met Khun Au, a rake-thin young woman who walks with a limp, and heard her tragic story of being raped in the derelict shop she called home while her husband lay dying beside her. It was then that idea for the Kate's Project Trust (www.katesproject.co.nr), named after McCarroll's mother, Kathleen Hall, was born.

"Somehow she [Khun Au] and I had a bond and could understand each other without words. We were women who had suffered in an unfair world," said Roisin.

"We found her a room that was safe near a recycling plant as she collected plastic bottles and cans to sell. This brought in just enough money to feed her, her cat and her dog. Au was so happy and loved to show me the key to her room every time we met. It was her security. To this day her smile lifts my soul," says Roisin.

She decided to set up a private initiative through a trust in Northern Ireland with an aim to educate slum children to break the "cycle of poverty", befriend and support individual families in the Pattaya slums, encourage the development of skills and literacy, provide basic food for families in need and help find new homes for families facing eviction.

The trust now has an office and a small clinic in Pattaya called the Centre of Hope, which it owns outright and is the hub for all its activities. It employs two full-time Thai staff, including Khun Noi, 30, and offers courses in hairdressing and other crafts as well as adult literacy and provides basic health care.

"We also have strong links with expatriate groups in and around Pattaya so we can sell the finished articles on the craft people's behalf through charity fairs and other events that the expats run," says Roisin.

"This ensures that they get a fair price."

The new project means that the McCarrolls could not stay in Thailand. "We had to return to Ireland to work full-time to keep the money coming in to fund the project," said McCarroll, but the project "felt right and we felt a great sense of freedom. We jumped and God caught us."

She told UCA News: "It is a personal way of Andrew and myself helping the poor."

Rate this article: (2 votes, average: 5 out of 5)

Loading ...

Leave a Comment

Name (required)



A child waters a plant as part of the Kate's Project initiative for development. Photo courtesy of Kate's Project website.

Email (required, but will not be published)

Country (required)

All comments are subject to approval before appearing.

Related Reports ▾

- [THAILAND Church Also Looks After Elderly 'Orphans'](#)
- [THAILAND Redemptorist Pioneer Of Thai Church's Social Welfare Ministry Dies](#)

Latest Reports ▾

- [INDIA New cathedral unites Christians, Hindus, Muslims](#)
- [BANGLADESH Program helps youths face life's challenges](#)
- [SINGAPORE Young Taoist priest bridges language barrier with Catholics](#)
- [INDIA Youths sweep street to instill civic pride](#)
- [PAKISTAN Challenges for catechists highlighted](#)

Most Viewed ▾

- [HONG KONG Bus commuters see leisure side of clergy](#)
- [THAILAND Missionary priest honored for family-focused AIDS work](#)
- [INDIA New cathedral unites Christians, Hindus, Muslims](#)
- [SINGAPORE Young Taoist priest bridges language barrier with Catholics](#)
- [INDIA Youths sweep street to instill civic pride](#)

Contact support@ucanews.com for questions on UCAN website.
Copyright © UCA News. All rights reserved.