



*Encouraged to live  
Empowered to create*

## Remembering 2023

Dear Friends,

In February 2024, we will be entering our project's 20<sup>th</sup> year. Hands of Hope started in response to those living with HIV facing discrimination and with few employment opportunities. We are



proud of what Thailand has achieved in this field, with zero transmission from mother to child and the availability of free ARV drug treatment for all Thais who require it. Lives on the whole, have improved and in Hands of Hope, we have seen former producers move on to employment outside, to work in other provinces or to self employment. They have seen their children reach adulthood and have built lasting friendships. We are in touch with past members who phone and visit.

It is only fitting that Sr Pranee and the staff of the Outreach Programme, received on this years' World Aids Day, royal recognition for their services in the area of HIV/Aids. We in Hands of Hope, are forever grateful for their efforts.

A smaller production group this past year, has meant a greater sharing of talents, with orders filled through a team effort. It has meant a greater openness too, to possibilities and to learning new skills formerly undertaken by others in the group. We have met every order and were especially pleased that there was sufficient work for employment five days a week throughout the year – not the reality of the past three years.



Sanit



Gay 2



Gay 1



Pik



Got



Samorn



Pit



Nuphit

We wish to therefore thank all those who sent orders including some who sent multiple times and we are grateful to friends who promoted our work in other circles. The feedback has been positive and encouraging.

Pik and Gay 1 accompanied me to Bangkok at the end of November for sales at the annual Ploenchit Fair in Bangkok Pattana International School on the Saturday and at a church on the Sunday Morning. No breakdown of our vehicle this year but still an exhausting weekend. However, sales were good and speaking directly with customers made it worthwhile and we were able to share their praise with the group upon our return.



*With our friend, Santa Bill*



Welcoming visitors to the project has always been a highlight of the year and 2023 saw visitors from Singapore, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Burma, Australia, Laos and the USA, along with 'locals' from Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket. We were happy to welcome Lori from the US, who came to our rescue with our fish raising project, following the massive loss last year due to low oxygen levels in the pond. With Lori's help, we purchased two solar powered aerators which have kept our fish alive – long enough to be caught and sold at the proper time!

This year, saw four new intakes of fingerlings (600 a time) and 578 kgs of fresh fish sold. We undertook the process of sun dried fish prior to the start of the raining season – which wasn't the best timing!! Once the sun began to shine again in November, we were so focussed on Christmas orders, that we were unable to start

again but start we will do!! There is a ready market for dried fish and although production is quite labour intensive, dried fish have a long shelf life and are easily transported to sales venues.



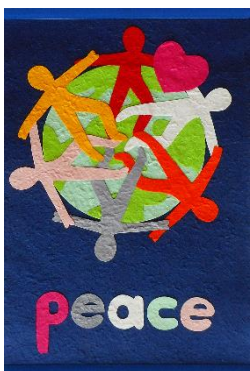
In our garden, papayas have given most successful yields. The trees popped up themselves – probably through our worm compost – and have provided a steady supply of green fruit for papaya salad. A local food stall has purchased our papaya for months - thanks to Gay 1’s entrepreneurship – and we have been grateful for the small additional income – offsetting the fish feed expenses. Time has been against us for any major planting this year, with the focus on craft production but Pit, who comes early each morning with Gay, quietly plants and tends the garden before work begins. Along with the papaya, bananas yield regularly with little effort on our part.



Over 19 years, we have had a number of resident canine and feline companions and all have significant roles in the project. Currently, Munjai (left) enters the workroom every day at 4:28, circles the tables and barks – unprompted - the ‘pack up and go home’ order. Chilli conducts quality control tests on the raw materials and Kanom keeps track of the orders.



A reminder to keep up with our news throughout next year, through our monthly blog posts. (link below) Hands of Hope will have their Christmas party on December 20<sup>th</sup> where we will be remembering the significant events of the past year, giving thanks for each other and for each of you, with whom we feel connected. After joining the Outreach Programme’s Christmas celebration on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the producers will take a well deserved break until we come together again on January 4<sup>th</sup>. If there will be early orders ready to fill upon re-opening, it will be a Happy New Year indeed!!



Our Christmas prayer is for Peace on Earth, at a time when the ‘slaughter of the innocents’ is happening daily around the world. May we pray for and end to warfare and work for peace in ourselves, our communities and between nations.

*With blessings for Christmas  
and throughout 2024 (2567 Thailand)  
With love and gratitude – Antonia and all*



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