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Summer 2018

My Dear Friend

About three years ago, the Association of Female Lawyers approached us to look at the possibility of establishing a Thai Boxing Gym at Youth Outreach. They themselves had already been involved in the sport for some time and had introduced it to our young people and they were hoping to have a more permanent venue for our young people and of course for themselves.

Eventually they found the funding to buy the necessary equipment and set up a gym in one of our multi-purpose rooms. The Association introduced a qualified trainer and he began to come in regularly to train up those young people who showed interest.

Ben came to us about a year and half ago. He had originally been very close to his mother and older sister. However, when he was 12 years old, his mother suddenly told him that she was getting a divorce from his father and she would move out of the house with his sister. He would stay and live with his father. He was not asked for his opinion on the matter.

His father spent a lot of his time at work and after work would often stay for “happy hour” with his friends. Ben was very much left to his own devices. He said that it seemed as if he and his father were two strangers living in the same house. Ben who had originally been well behaved and worked hard at school, without the care and affection of his mother, began to go downhill. He became moody and impulsive and got into more and more trouble at school. Since there was no one at home, he began to spend his time on the streets with his friends and then began skipping school altogether.

He felt that nobody cared; nobody was interested. He started taking out his unhappiness on anyone who irritated him and often got into gang fights with his friends. He seemed to view any problems he met as being created by someone else and his response was often a violent, uncontrolled outburst aimed at anyone who got in his way. He later told us that this helped him to feel better because it meant he could put the hurt and pain of his family experiences at the back of his mind.

He was asked to leave school after he finished form three. Since he was already 16 years old, he got a job on a building site and considered himself an adult who could look after himself. Unfortunately, he was in fact, still an inexperienced child and was cheated out of a large part of his pay packet by one of the other men who worked on the building site. This left him shocked and very distrustful of people except for his old friends.

He stopped looking for work altogether and spent all his time hanging around on the streets with his friends. He got involved in petty theft (since he had no work) and was often involved in gang fights and collecting protection money.

After one of these fights, the police pulled him in. They had no evidence that he had committed a crime but since they had often seen him around they gave him a warning just the same. They also recommended that he try coming to Youth Outreach. He was a bit sceptical about Youth Outreach but one night stopped by the Hangout to check us out. Much to his surprise, he saw the Thai Boxing Program and said he would like to try it. Unknown to him, this was going to change his life.

In the beginning, it was the fighting that attracted him but as the training progressed, the Master taught him that fighting is the last thing. He had to learn patience, restraint and control. He needed to respect other people and curb his own emotions. After a lot of effort and sweat (and some tears!) he slowly began to see that the secret was not lashing out when he was angry but using self-control and deciding calmly what he wanted to do.

Now after more than a year he is a different person. Outbursts of temper are a thing of the past. He has been promoted to Training Assistant and has started taking part in open competitions. He has already notched up two wins and one loss. His comment about losing was that the important thing is to stand up again and carry on.

It is always encouraging for us when we meet a young man like Ben. His potential could so easily have been wasted hanging out with the triads, taking drugs and going along the all too familiar road to crime and prison. Let us celebrate Ben's new life and his determination to "carry on" in spite of any setbacks.

As we move into the summer months, I appeal to you to make a generous gift to help us continue offering support and encouragement to all these young people so that they too can stride out courageously on the road of life.

Sincerely



Peter Newbery