

## **PWA NETWORKING**

PWA society is important for community building and empowerment. We have learned a great deal about how PWA feels when they meet each other. Through Naam Chewit Newsletter, many PWA who live in isolation can find groups of friends. Oftenly when we have friends who are living with HIV from overseas to visit PWA groups in Thailand. Eventhough they speak different languages, the communication is far beyond language understanding.

The first PWA society in Thailand - the Wednesday Friends Club - was found in 1992 in Bangkok, in 1994 the New Life Friends Center was officially formed in Chiangmai. In 1996 there are 75 PWA groups in the northern region, which now become the largest PWA network, there are also PWA network in central region and network in the northeastern region. In February 1997, the nation wide seminar of PWA, there will be about 300 delegates from all communities participating in the event. The PWA groups and communities are not just a self-help groups they are advocacy groups for their rights and equal treatment as well as the most dedicated and strongest volunteers forces in community care and home care programmes.

At the 1994 annual seminar of the Thailand's NGO Coalition on AIDS, 14 PWA organizations attended and become part of the coalition. Naam Chewit has been part of this important factor in organization building and was honoured to co-ordinate and chaired the first PWA seminar.

*Name of Life*  
**นามชีวิต**

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## **NAAM CHEWIT PROJECT**

*SINCE 1990*

Naam Chewit emphasises the important of 'Life as living'. Whether it be learning to live with HIV or sharing the fight, the pain and the joy with those living with HIV.

We wish to help heal the wounds of prejudice caused by misleading campaigns, to seek ways to protect the human rights of people who live with HIV, and their families. We wish to share the grief with those who have lost their loved ones, and commemorate those who have passed away from us.

We realize that AIDS is a catastrophe of our era and has taken thousands of people's lives. And before long millions of lives will be taken by this disease without a cure.

We believe medical science will someday find the way to fight the virus, someday... in the future...

But for today we will not lose hope, because medical science is not the only answer for those of us living with the virus together in our society. Whether this disease which is harming our lives is curable or incurable we can still live together with love and care and support for those who suffer. We believe in living together, with understanding, with determination to maintain 'life', with hope, and together we help each other to build a happy society. This is the strength and power we have together to fight AIDS.

## **RESOURCE CENTER FOR PWA**

Books donated by friends abroad, and regular publishing materials from friends overseas; AIDS Action, WORLD, Women Positive, Positive Living, PWA BC (Vancouver), Positive News, etc. Publications from PWA groups and NGO and GO organizations in Thailand; Bodaeng Center Newsletter, New Life Friends Center Newsletter, Love Neighbour Newsletter, AIDS Newsletter, Napac AIDS Newsletter, Community Newsletter, etc.

There are books, research papers, medical science reports, alternative therapy reports, books and papers on herbal medicines, news clippings... These are tasks we've been given by friends to serve PWA communities in Thailand.

Approximately 6 telephone calls a day, for counselling and talking or asking for new information about HIV/AIDS, medicines, herbal uses, etc... Many teach us about herbal medicines they use, or want to exchange ideas about different herbal usage. This kind of knowledge is coming in and out through our telephone lines.

## **NAAM CHEWIT NEWSLETTER**

Since 1993 Naam Chewit started a bi-monthly publication reaching out to PWA communities in Thailand. The publication started with only a few hundred subscribers and it has reached to more than 5,000 individuals in 1996. About 60

percents of our readers are PWA. The publication is also available in 10 major hospitals in Bangkok, Community centers and groups, NGO offices, villages reading centers, Community Clinics and libraries, etc...

NAAM CHEWIT Newsletter reports on information about anti-viral medicine available in Thailand, alternative therapy, herbal information, opportunistic sickness, healthy living. The newsletter also publish articles written by PWA and issues related to HIV/AIDS, such as human rights, gender, mother & children, law, sexuality, etc.

## **ART TO UNDERSTAND AIDS**

The process of making art is a process of thought, development of positive ideas and it is an expression of personnel attitude. The Art to Understand AIDS works with school students, it is a workshop to create their own AIDS education materials, to be used in school and community nearby the school. While students make their artworks, they must try to find ways to express their concern and sympathy to those who have lost their loved one and those who live with the virus. The process opens people's minds to many positive solutions. It is a step forward to get rid of blood and skull messages.

Some of the students artworks were put together in big panels, and they have joined in with the AIDS Memorial Quilt, an international network of memorials to those who passed away with AIDS.