

Younger generation toeing the modern moral line

People could be forgiven for thinking more and more Thai teens these days have fewer morals and ethics.

Published on February 2, 2008

But for some young people, the opposite applies as they seek to demonstrate that the pitfalls of modern living can be held at bay.

They are helping others to improve their lives. Some are working to adjust the behaviour of friends to make them more socially acceptable.

Their works were presented as part of the Third National Morals, Ethics and Values Assembly held by the Centre for the Promotion of National Strength at Impact Arena, Muang Thong Thani from Friday to Sunday.

Apiwat Kaewraya, 18, a Banharnjamsaiwittaya 6 student from Suphan Buri, is part of a student group that completed a project encouraging fellow students to seek merit at temples.

He noticed very few youths were making merit and sought to reverse that trend.

"So many teenagers feel embarrassed about making merit. Some even told me they were shy when they scoop rice into bowls when giving alms to monks.

"That's why my friends and I try to turn them back and get them to make merit at temples," Apiwat told The Nation.

"We have to accept teenagers know every nook and cranny inside 7-Eleven stores better than a temple."

He said his group had been working on the project since May last year.

The group encourages students of all age levels to take turns to visit a temple near their school every Buddhist Sabbath to give alms to monks, listen to sermons and clean the temple grounds.

"After participating in our project, more students have been going to the temple on their own at weekends," he said.

Another project by Chanthaburi's Nongtakhong-pittayakarn School students helped students learn about saving money and balancing account books.

Surat Jantong, 18, who conducted the project, said his group did not want students to be extravagant.

Thus, they taught them accounting skills.

Members of the group checked to see if students balanced their books and opened bank accounts to save money.

Eventually, they took money from the students to make deposits every month.

"Seventy per cent of students in the school gave us money to deposit in their accounts," Surat said,

"We also educated parents on managing their account books. About 200 families now do their own accounting. We also help them review their books every month.

"Some parents say they now know how much they spend and can reduce unnecessary expenses to set money aside," Surat said.

These projects are among 39 moral projects initiated by students countrywide.

Others tackle stray dogs and cats, building houses for poor elderly people, developing schools and composing songs about morality to entertain youth.

Meanwhile Privy Councillor Tanin Kraivixien, who chaired the opening of the event, said he wanted the public to adhere to the right things when judging anybody or anything.

"I would like parents to educate their children on showing integrity. Being good moral children is more important than being top students," he said.

Many students were praised for outstanding essays, drawings and poems on ethics and morality to honour His Majesty the King.

A 17-year-old Chon Buri student, who won the drawing competition for secondary level, Kritthee Nuntitat, said he drew a massive tree grown by honest people, with various professionals pointing out that if people worked honestly, Thailand would progress like the tree.

Sunanta Chapanont, a 24-year-old participant, said the event made her aware of others who had whole-heartedly provided useful activities to help the development of rural children.

"I've learnt being ethical means you don't exploit others but help those who are in need," she said.

Wannapa Phetdee

The Nation