

The Phillipo Family – Christopher and Rosawanni

Ethnicity : Burmese

Children: Christine (14), Roselin (11), Miximelian (9) Andrew (7) Jame (5)

Interview Date: Tuesday 2nd February 2009

Course Attended: E-Learning Porirua CiH Course 25 (March – May 2007)



Christopher and Rosawanni Phillipo are from a state called Kayah which is located in Burma. For 18 years prior to December 2006 they lived in a refugee camp situated in Thailand. For the Phillipo family, life in the refugee camp was all about survival. They had no money and food was scarce. There were no opportunities to learn. Christopher says life was very hard. Some nights Soldiers would let off rockets. Christopher and Rosawanni would have to leave, in fear that if they didn't, their lives would be lost. Christopher and Rosawanni would have to pick their kids up, run and hide. Hiding could mean lying low in bushes for 2–3 months! Christopher and Rosa would

think about their future all the time. They never ever imagined that they would be living the life they do today.

In March 2007 Christopher and Rosawanni participated in Computers in Homes. Many other Burmese families attended course 25 tailored specifically to help the Burmese community. Most Burmese families on course 25 spoke and understood no English, whilst some spoke very little. A Burmese translator was used to translate the tutor's English instructions into Burmese so that they could carry out and complete the tasks required and overcome this challenge. Each family learnt how to use a computer, how to perform a number of word processing functions and how to use the internet and email. Before the end of the course each family created their own CV. At the end of the course, each family was given a computer with access to the internet for 12 months.

"In Burma I couldn't even afford to buy an apple, having a computer in my house is like gold, we are very lucky to be in New Zealand"

Christopher says on the computer you can do anything. Christopher has learnt how to transfer mp3's and digital photos to and from various devices. The whole Phillipo family listen to Burmese news on BBC radio and often listen to English radio to help them learn the English language. Rosawanni says "I like it that you can use the computer to find jobs. I also like it that you can type letters and print them out without having to go somewhere else to do it."



The children all use the internet to look for information to help with homework and of course like most kids, love to play games. Christopher says that the computer is a good tool to help his children with their education and believes they will experience much more.

Christopher and Rosawanni have friends in Burma, Wellington, Thailand, Norway, Australia and Switzerland. They use email regularly and also use MSN live chat to communicate. Christopher says that in 2008 he completed his Short Course Certificate in Computer Applications Level One with Whitireia Community Polytechnic. On the course he learnt more about Microsoft Office. Christopher wants to study more with computers. Christopher smiles and says "Because of all the opportunities in Porirua my family has a very bright future, once I have mastered English, I would like to get a job in the computer industry – maybe I could be a computer teacher."