

Music pays for teen's op

by
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A GUITAR teacher has cleared a Thai family's £1,000 debt after his sponsored child incurred huge medical bills following major heart surgery.

Simon Ashworth, of Cirencester, and his wife Kathrin have sponsored 15-year-old Phanida for the past 11 years and visit her every year.

Her mother died of AIDS when she was a baby and her father abandoned her, meaning she now lives with her grandparents.

In 2009 the impoverished family suffered devastating news when Phanida was diagnosed with a hole in her heart and was forced to undergo heart surgery.

Although she made a full recovery, the family's income of less than £1 a day meant they were unable to pay for travelling expenses to the hospital in the city of Chiang Mai while Phanida was recovering.

The family were left with an impossible £1,000 debt to settle but Mr Ashworth successfully raised the money through his guitar teaching business and delivered it to Phanida in per-



Simon Ashworth, Phanida and Kathryn Ashworth

son last month. The funds also enabled Mr Ashworth and his wife Kathrin to build a bedroom for Phanida as she had previously shared a tiny room with both her grandparents.

Mr Ashworth said: "Phanida always has a smile on her face. It is especially sobering when you consider how poor her family is and the fact that she has had such a traumatic childhood.

"Yet she is a happy young girl who works hard at school and we just want to help where we can improve her chances in life.

"She is studying to improve

her English so she can work as a tour guide when she is older."

The couple have set up an ongoing fund to help pay for her education.

Mr Ashworth said they were extremely happy Phanida and her family can get on with their daily lives without the burden of heavy debt on their minds.

"Phanida would like to thank all my students and their families for their kind and generous support which will allow her and her family to get back to a normal life in Thailand," he added.