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Second marathon for Bangkok's 'Slum Sister'

The inspirational work being done in the Klong Toei slums by Aussie nun Sister Joan Evans has won her many devoted admirers.

But her closest – and fittest – supporter would have to be social worker Megan Payne, who next month will run her second marathon to raise money for Sister Joan's activities in Bangkok.

Payne, 30, now living in Sydney, has never forgotten the Perth nun, whom she worked with in Bangkok from 2001 to 2003.

In November 2002, Payne raised more than A\$25,000 (Bt500,000 at the time) in sponsorship when she completed the 42-km Bangkok Marathon. The money was used to buy a much-needed new van for Sister Joan, who uses the vehicle to transport elderly slum dwellers to hospital for medical check-ups, and for her "milk run" – a fortnightly distribution of free powdered milk to parents of babies in the Rong Mu (Slaughterhouse) slum.

Payne plans to run the Great Wall Marathon in Beijing on May 21 - and is seeking supporters and donations once again.

All the proceeds will fund work by Sister Joan in the Klong Toei slums.

The Australian nun, who is 71, has been helping the poor in the port community since 1991. Last year she paid for uniforms, shoes and education fees for several hundred youngsters from deprived homes.

Friends joke that Sister Joan is one of the biggest "loan sharks" in the slums - helping people pay their bills on the proviso that they come back with receipts to prove the money was used as intended.

Her reputation for not pressing for the "loans" to be repaid has made the narrow path to her house well-worn. It's not unusual to see people queued at her door morning and night.

Payne called her first marathon a "Sisterathon", so naturally the latest effort is "Sisterathon 2".

For more information about Sister Joan, see her website, www.sisterjoan.info, and click on the Sisterathon 2 link.

People who want to support Megan Payne can e-mail her at sisterathon2@hotmail.com.

Jim Pollard,
The Nation