

*The Ayui Foundation is a non-religious, non-government organisation that provides a home, educational opportunities and future pathways for disadvantaged Akha hilltribe teenagers.*

# ***Ayui Foundation***

## ***NEWSLETTER***



**Sumalee Milne OAM**  
**Director**

**OCTOBER 2018**  
**Chiang Rai, Thailand**

### **FROM THE DIRECTOR**

This is the last week of school before the mid-year break and then the students go back to their villages or stay in town and find work. Towards the end of this term we accepted two new girls – sisters Saranya (13) and Jeranya (8) – who are kindly sponsored by a long-term Singaporean supporter. The sisters are part of a family of five children. Their parents are poor farmers who are struggling. Saranya helps keep an eye on and take care of her younger sister. She is quiet and responsible, and good at school while Jeranya is well-liked at Ayui because she's well-behaved.



This month Akha communities everywhere in the region celebrated the annual Akha Swing Ceremony, usually held in villages, where 4 saplings in a square are tied together at the top and a swing is hung down from the center. The traditional custom is to celebrate the end of planting season, and to have a good time after their hard work. Many young Akha working elsewhere will return home for this event. This year, I went with some of our students to the festivities held at Saam Yaek Akha in Mae Salong, which has also turned into an annual tourist event. The Tai Yai ethnic group and two Chinese ethnic groups also performed there. Also, our girls were asked to perform at the ceremony held at the Akha Association, a week later.





**CULTURAL PERFORMANCES FROM  
AKHA SWING FESTIVAL 2018**





***In 2015, child sponsors Richard and Serena Hield offered to also provide a scholarship for a university student who showed potential and Sripai Becheku came to Ayui to apply. She had the chance to study in China as an exchange student, and this is what she wrote for the newsletter:***



Hello, my name is Sripai Becheku. I'm 22 years old. I study at Rajabhat University in Chiang Rai, majoring in Chinese language. I am in my 4th and final year of university. I come from a poor family with six children. Only five of us are studying and the eldest did not get to study because my parents could not afford it. While I was in my first year at university, my father got very sick and had to have an operation, which cost a lot of money. Because of this, my parents could not afford to let me continue at university. So for the third term, I came to ask for a scholarship from the Ayui Foundation because my parents were unable to support me at university anymore. The Foundation set me up with a scholarship so that I could keep studying without having to depend on my parents for financial support.

When I was in my third year at university, I had the opportunity to study in China as an exchange student at Zhengzhou University for one year. This was very beneficial for me. My Chinese language skills greatly improved - my speaking, listening, writing and reading skills – more than when I was studying Chinese in Thailand. This is because when I was in Zhengzhou I had the chance to mix with the Chinese, other foreign students learning Chinese and other students in my class who spoke Chinese. So I used my Chinese skills every day and heard only Chinese. When I first went there, I didn't really understand what they were saying because they spoke very fast and I was not so fluent in Chinese yet. But after a while, I began to follow their conversations more easily because I had been absorbing the language and learning more day by day, and was more confident to chat with the locals.



Going to China as an exchange student for one year enabled me to get closer to the culture and traditions, more so than while studying in Thailand because I was directly experiencing them. I saw what the Chinese did, how they lived, and it made me understand them more. Now, I am back [in Chiang Rai] for my fourth and final year, studying for my Bachelor's degree. Actually, Chinese majors study for just three and a half years but mine will take 4 years because I have to make up for the time I was in China. I will graduate after my friends here as some subjects here could not be transferred or studied in China but only in Thailand, such as Translating and Research.

I would like to thank the Ayui Foundation and my sponsors for giving me the opportunity to become an exchange student in China. It was an enjoyable experience and I had the chance to make friends from another country and exchange our cultures. Thank you!





In July, **Vanessa Rouse** visited the Ayui Foundation with a group of students from the **Australian National University's South East Asian Frontiers Course**. When she learned that the TV at the Girls Home was very old and defective (from pre-flat screen days), Vanessa kindly donated the funds to purchase a new TV for the very happy girls.

★ Thank you to long-time Swiss supporter **Monika Mueller** for her **B6,000** donation.

★ Also, we would like to thank members of the Chiang Mai Expats Club Donation Committee - Yvonne Ziegler, Laura Macdonald, David McPhee and Dave McComas - for coming to visit Ayui Foundation to learn more about us and see how they could help us support the children.



Thanks to former Ayui student **Asor Chermer**, who graduated from Vocational College in 2013, for coming to visit. It's always nice to hear from former students. Asor is living in Bangkok and started a jewelry-making business. On his next visit, he will cook a meal for all the Ayui students.



***If you would like to VISIT, FUNDRAISE, VOLUNTEER or DONATE  
please email us at [Ayui.foundation@gmail.com](mailto:Ayui.foundation@gmail.com)  
[www.ayuifoundation.org](http://www.ayuifoundation.org)***

***If anyone is able to support the foundation for a month at a time  
our average monthly expenditure is B80,000.***

**Australian bank account:**  
***Bendigo Bank***  
***Acc no:133516195 BSB:633-000***  
***Sumalee Milne-In Trust for Ayui***



**Thai bank account:**  
***Siam Commercial Bank***  
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[www.ayuifoundation.org](http://www.ayuifoundation.org)***