

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*

April 2020

Chiang Rai, Thailand

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Another school year has ended and we are sad to say goodbye to our students who have graduated and are moving on from Ayui. It has been so rewarding watching them grow from shy little kids to confident young adults with a clear future goal. All but one of these students moved into Ayui in 2014, so it has been their second home for the last six years.

News of the Covid19 virus reached us early in Chiang Rai, as northern Thailand is geographically close to China, and by the time we were hearing about increasing cases in Bangkok, it was the end of term and most of the students had gone home to their villages. To our friends, sponsors, volunteers and donors, I hope you all *STAY SAFE*.

OUR GRADUATES



L to R: Somyot, Asong, Rattana and Anurak

Rattana will stay on at Ayui and attend Vocational College

Congratulations GRADUATES

Asong's Story

My name is Asong Laecheku. I am 15 years old. Before I moved into the hostel, I lived at home and studied up to Grade 2. When I lived at home, I also had to take one of my brothers to school, too. When I lived at home, I worked in the fields to help my parents, looked after my little brothers, and got to play sometimes. But, mostly, I worked in the fields.

The reason I moved to the foundation is because there are a lot of children in my family to raise and we are a poor family. [His father is a drug addict and a burden to the family] So, my mother brought me to apply at the Ayui hostel.

I moved into this place when I started Grade 3, when I was 9 years old. This year, I will graduate Grade 9 and I am 15. I learned many things living at the Ayui hostel, for example, from not knowing how to cook and not being able to read well, the older kids at Ayui helped to show me and teach me until I could read and can cook. The older students and the houseparents helped to teach me until I learned how to do things myself. Living at the Ayui hostel, I made many friends and we played sports and did many activities, many things together. I was very happy living at the Ayui hostel. I was also able to learn English at Ayui, which helped me to chat with Westerners. Thank you for putting me through school until I graduated Grade 9. Thank you.



2014



2015



2016



2017



2018

**Asong will undertake the Mechanics course at Technical college and live on campus.*

Chart's Story

My name is Aphichart Bechaku and my nickname is Chart. I am 18 years old. Before I moved into Ayui, I lived at home and went to the local school. The reason I moved into Ayui is because my family did not have enough money to put us all through school. I have 3 siblings and if one more had to be supported through school it meant someone else would not be able to stay in school. So, my father sent me to live at the Ayui hostel. I lived here since the age of 13 to the age of 18; a total of 6 years. The hostel taught me to be a good person and to help others. It taught me to live with others and, importantly, to know how to give rather than receive.



2014



2015



2016



2017



2018



2019

**Chart graduated from Technical College in Electrical Engineering and hopes to work for an internet provider as he did an internship with one so is now experienced in installing internet. His graduation ceremony has been postponed due to the spread of Covid19.*

Somyot's Story

My name is Somyot Yersor and I am 15 years old. Before I moved into this hostel, I lived with my aunt and went to school. I lived with her till the end of Grade 3. The reason I moved into this hostel is because my family is poor and life was difficult. [His parents separated, mother left and father moved to work in the South so he was raised by his aunt] I lived here at Ayui for 6 years; from Grade 4 up till Grade 9. I learned many things from living at this hostel, such as how to cook and how to live with many others. I got to study to a higher level and I had many new and interesting experiences here.



2014



2015



2016



2017



2018

**Somyot received a Soccer Scholarship to study for free at Technical College and will live on campus. He thanks his sponsor for buying him his first pair of soccer shoes in 2014.*

Anurak's Story



My name is Anurak Rattanapratyakun. I chose to find a hostel to live at because my family is poor so I wanted to take the burden off my parents. At the time, my parents were putting my older sister through her first year of vocational college. So, it meant most of my parent's money had to go towards her education. I moved into Ayui for Grade 9, when I was 15. Now, I graduated Grade 12 at age 19.

Since the very first time I came here, I felt it was a warm place because we all live as one big family. We help each other with everything. Secondly, I learned how to cook from the houseparents and the older kids. When I first moved in, I didn't know how to cook anything. The longer I stayed here, the more they taught me and now I can make almost anything, and it's delicious, too! I learnt many things from the housefather and the older boys, such as making a vegetable garden, making fertilizer and growing different vegetables. I also learned how to raise chickens, ducks and fish - knowledge I can take home and use. The fourth thing I learned was to be on time because, here, we have a schedule to follow. For example, we have to wake up at 05.30, eat dinner at 18.30 and go to bed by 22.00. It taught me responsibility and punctuality. I am very happy I got to live at this hostel because I have improved my English a lot. In the beginning, I knew nothing about English but now I can understand, read and write some English, and chat with our volunteers. Having the opportunity to learn English here every Saturday was really useful for me. I really want to thank the Ayui Foundation. I am very happy.



Anurak with his father at graduation.

**Anurak will be our first Yr 12 graduate to go on to university, studying Sports Science.*



Another Grade 12 graduate is 18-year old Aphisara. She has lived at Ayui for the past 4 years. Her father is a gambler so she wants to help her mother with family income. She decided to go and work in Korea after graduation, where some Akha have gone to work in factories due to the good money they can make and send home, but due to Covid19 her plans have been put on hold.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

During this time, we had 2 French volunteers. Since the end of December, Martin Schmitt taught English to the Ayui boys for about a month. The boys really enjoyed learning English at the Boys Home so he must have been a good teacher! We had a farewell party for him and hopes he visits us again. For about a week, Lyn volunteered at the Girls Home doing English activities and games. Nice to see some French volunteers again, and it was great to have a male volunteer because we don't get many.



★ ★ ★ Thank You! ★ ★ ★

A heartfelt thank you goes to **Kok Hiang Tan** (Singapore) for sponsoring Asong and Chart for 6 years, **Malcolm Burrows** (UK) for sponsoring Somyot for 6 years, **Winnie Cain** (USA) from the Akha Women's Foundation for sponsoring Aphisara for 4 years, and to **Stephen Keiley** (Australia) for sponsoring Rattana for the past 6 years. All of these kind sponsors visited Ayui over the years to meet the students in person and encourage them with their studies. Thank you for continuing your support by sponsoring other students at Ayui for the next school year.



A big thank you goes to that kind-hearted group of people in Chiang Mai, the Chiang Mai Expat Club (CMEC) for making our dream come true of providing all our girls with bunk beds!

Thanks, also, to English magazine Chiang Mai Citylife, for their donation to cover lunch costs of all our college students for one term.

A big shout out to **Chili's Grill & Bar in St George, Utah, USA**, for their 'Giving Back' event when 15% of their daily earnings are donated to a non-profit; in this way, the Akha Women's Foundation received over \$1,000 to support us.

Thanks also goes to Khun Chamrieng Bunmanon, Director of Ampai Kindergarten in Chiang Rai, for donating bottles of hand sanitizer for the Ayui students and her husband, Khun Tawan Sirjan for buying new T-shirts for all the Ayui students.



Last but not least, we really appreciate our donors in Australia – Chris Payne, Annette Ellis, John Cassisi, Lauren Dowell and Ruixin Yang.

*If you would like to VISIT, FUNDRAISE, VOLUNTEER or DONATE
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