

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 2021

Chiang Rai, Thailand

### FROM THE DIRECTOR



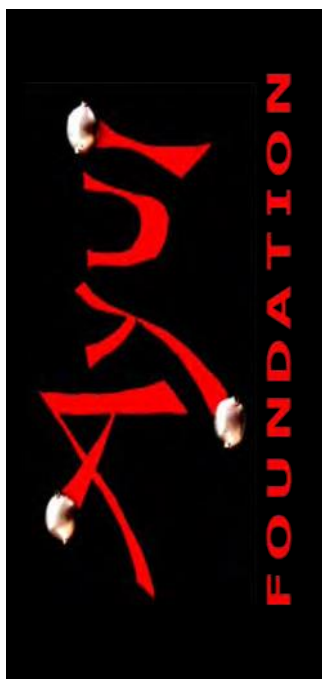
I'm sure many of you can relate when I say this school year feels like it has been going on forever! Our Covid19 lockdown started this time last year, just after we had closed for the 2020 long summer break. After three months of lockdown, we started the school year later than usual and we also ended late, so it's a relief that it's finally over and we can all take a well-needed break.

We also had to deal with water problems. The 2 wells at the Boys Home dried up (earlier each year), and so did the water supply at one of the Girls homes. So, we connected that house to the government water supply (a new expense for us) and bought a 1,000L container for the boys to fill up and use at their Home every few days. Covid19 saw worldwide lockdowns and travel bans, which meant this year we had no visitors, volunteers, or fundraisers, and the charities I contacted had temporarily closed, redirected their funds to Covid relief, or simply did not reply. So we were low on funds and struggling to find more.



(plus shrimps and crabs) in our fishpond before it dried up for summer.

On the suggestion of a sponsor, I sent out an Annual Appeal listing our funding needs so that we could start the 2021 school year with enough annual funds. I was overwhelmed with the great response to our Appeal, and the many words of encouragement that we keep doing what we do.



# GRADUATION

Due to Covid19 restrictions, most schools here held closed graduation ceremonies without family members or allowing only two to attend. That meant the staff, Director and most of the Ayui children who always go to congratulate graduates at the end of the ceremony were not able to do so. Our good friend Jae had suggested throwing an end-of-year party, so this was also a good reason to have one. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, before the students all went home for the summer break, the kids decorated the house and our graduates put on their uniforms for the last time for some photos. Then Jae and his family arrived with ice cream cake, KFC and pizza (the first time some of the kids had tried it). Since we had no visitors during the year, the girls took the opportunity to practice their traditional dancing so, to thank Jae and his lovely wife Ying, the boys sang an Akha song and the girls performed three dances.



Then our college graduate, Suthida, gave an emotional speech about how she was sad it was time to leave and get a job and that if she hadn't been accepted at Ayui, she is certain she would not have graduated. Suthida will be missed by all because she was like the fun, older sister who always enthusiastically participated in hostel activities, even though she only lived with us for her 3 college years. Saranya will start Vocational College and Manop will start Technical College, staying on at Ayui. Thank you to their sponsors, especially Alanna Maclean, for the gifts and letters, and visiting Suthida.



# SUTHIDA'S STORY



2018

“Before moving into the Ayui Foundation, I lived at home with my parents. I had never lived in a hostel or lived in town. I had just lived in the mountains, and never lived together with others like this. At first, I was glad to her I would be moving into Ayui because I thought I would have many friends but, the first day I moved in, I didn't have any friends. I didn't know any of the others. But, after a while, I had had many friends, both at school and at the hostel. When I first moved in – because I was just a kid and had never lived in a hostel – I didn't understand why we had to do chores, do our homework, cook, and have weekly meetings. When I lived at home, I didn't do any of these things. At first, I felt that I didn't want to stay here because I saw that my friends who lived in rented dorm rooms were having fun with their freedom. But then something happened to make me realize I was lucky.

During my first year, I was secretly using my phone late at night (against the rules) I was caught by the housemother and had to sign the Rule Book for the second time, meaning I had one more chance here. I realized that my friends who said they loved and cared about me couldn't help me now. It was my parents, Kru Sue and the housemother who put me through school, who were constantly teaching me things and worrying about me. I was the one who was opposing them, when they just had my wellbeing in their minds. After that night, I realized all this and was determined to change my attitude to be more appropriate to those who were supporting my education. I want to thank Kru Sue for giving me another chance at Ayui because, if not, I would not have graduated college.



2019

Lastly, being at Ayui taught me about how to get through life. I learned many life skills, and gained lots of confidence participating in all the activities. The most important thing is the love that I received here at Ayui, which I had never gotten from anywhere else. I love Baan Ayui so much that I don't want to leave. But it is time I left and started my own life. Finally, I want to say thank you to Kru Sue for the past 3 years, and for always teaching me and guiding me until I graduated.”



2020



2021



Kru Sue and Suthida

# OUR ACTIVITIES

Covid19 restrictions meant that, this year, there were no local Children's Day events so the kids asked if we could have our own event at Ayui. We had a fun day of games and it was great to see the smiles on everyone's faces when they could forget about Covid for a while and enjoy being children.



One of our Board members, who is involved in local water conservation activities, asked for volunteers to help construct a dam in Mae Yao district to contain water for the dry season. Housefather Wit and five of our oldest boys volunteered and, along with 5 other volunteers, spent one Saturday building a bamboo dam, filling bags with sand and then placing them in the bamboo structure.



Jae brought a friend from the US, John, who teaches baking to hilltribe groups. John offered to teach the older girls, with Ying as interpreter. So, during a few Saturday mornings, the girls enjoyed learning to make cookies, banana cake, brownies and cakes.



Congratulations to our two Technical College Higher Certificate graduates, Yohan and Golf. They left Ayui after graduating college but continued studying for their College Higher Certificate. Thank you to Malcolm Burrows for sponsoring them for all 5 of their college years, including an internship at a major car dealership.



*Yohan and Golf*



THANK YOU

## ***THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO RESPONDED TO OUR APPEAL***

From Thailand: Yvonne Zeigler, the British Women's Group of Bangkok, Vincent & Pat Phoo-on, Angel Tsai, Pic Kamcha, Helen Ta, and Amy Woolaston.

From Australia: Annette Pilloni, Penny Milne, Kerry Bowerman, the Rotary Club of Glenorchy (Tasmania), Marty Morrison, Ruixin Yang, Don and Charlie Higgins, Frederick Sutherland, Martin Ziegler, Lauren Dowell and Chris Payne.

From the USA: Amanda Creiglow, Colleen Cook, Nouanesavy Saysy, and Sangkhom Ratsavong.

Finally, thank you to Hal Radin (Malaysia), Angie and Alex Duenas (Guam), and Ruby Meier (Germany).

Thank you to all our wonderful child sponsors for renewing sponsorship this year. We also want to thank new sponsors Dylan Hartmann (Australia) and Richard Murray (Thailand) for sponsoring 4 of our students.



*Our Staff, Pim and Wit*



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