

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 2023

Chiang Rai, Thailand

FROM THE DIRECTOR

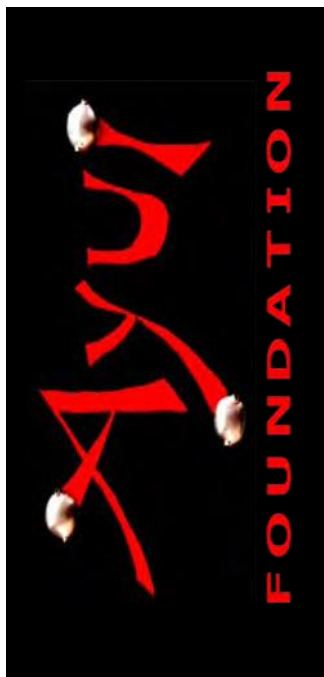


It's hard to believe, but we have come to the end of another school year! We had a fun and busy time over last few months, so it's nice that we can all take a long, summer break now. For the next school year, we will be needing more child sponsors so if anyone is interested, please let me know. The highlight of this reporting period was being visited by old friends and former volunteers,

Annette Pilloni and Bruce Millar from Australia. Their last visit was in 2015. Like last time, they generously paid for all the Foundation kids to go watch a Chiang Rai United soccer match. They got to meet the two students they sponsor, and replaced our broken guitar. Best of all, they asked me to arrange a dinner with some of the students they remember from 2015. I have kept in touch with a few of them over the years (and they have kept in touch with each other) but it was great seeing them again and hearing about what they are doing now. I am proud to say they all have jobs and are doing well, and May, who lived at the foundation from Grade 1 to Vocational College and just returned from working for 3 years in Japan, has invited me to her April wedding.



L-R: Ploy, May, Yohan, Tanongsak, Asong, Aphichart
Seated L-R: Meelae, Annette, Sue, Bruce, Wit (staff), Boy



GRADUATION

Congratulations to Wanna, Kittika, Katanyou and Piti for graduating from lower high school (Grade 9) in March. The 2 boys chose to continue to Grade 12, while the 2 girls decided to attend Vocational College, and they will all remain living at the Foundation. Thank you to their sponsors Winnie Cain, Lauren Dowell, Annette and Bruce, and Richard Murray for supporting them this year and helping them to achieve this milestone.



L to R: Katanyou, Wanna, Kittika and Piti

CHILDREN'S DAY

January 14th is Children's Day here and, luckily, one of our long-term sponsors from Singapore was in town for it. Kok Hiang Tan kindly sent the funds to buy each student a present, and provide lunch and ice-cream for the day. Mr Tan got to meet all his sponsored kids and two Ayui graduates, whom he used to sponsor, came by just to see him again.



OUR VOLUNTEERS



Erika, from Hungary, volunteered at the Girls Home for about 3 weeks in January, teaching English. Luckily, she was with us for Children's Day, and organized fun games for the kids. We asked her to write about her experience with us:

My routine was meeting the girls at their school, going home with them, doing some chores or playing until dinner, then having dinner together (all the meals they cooked were very tasty and the barbecue was pure heaven) and then after dinner we had English class.

I always included games, crosswords and some fun activities to help them enjoy classes. Everyone made progress and I believe if they continue learning, their knowledge will improve tremendously.

It was amazing to see them on Children's Day having great fun and a wonderful time. They looked very happy and carefree, which I am not sure is the case but occasions like this help them to forget hardships or difficulties and to fully enjoy life. The children's home is a safe haven, where they live like a family. It was touching to see the love and care they share, and the bond they have. Not just the girls but among the boys, as well.

On Teacher's Day holiday, I asked the kids to make a presentation about the Akha tribe, about their history, culture and traditions. The children did an amazing job and it was very informative. I also found their traditional outfits beautiful. On my last day, the girls danced an Akha dance, which touched my heart and the dance itself was lovely.

In my opinion, what they get at the foundation is really precious, not just a chance for education but learning important life skills, a warm and safe environment and the opportunity to preserve their culture. This place is a great example of how even if someone carries a trauma or has hardship in life but there is someone who stands by their side and supports them, their life can be fulfilled and they can achieve great things. The children at the foundation are very lucky to have Sue, she does a fantastic job providing everything possible for the children and they are also lucky to have Wit, the housefather/driver, who is a father-figure and a friend in one person.

I wish all the best to everyone!

Erika

Rashid, from the US, volunteered with us for about 2 weeks in February, alternating between teaching English at the Boys and Girls Homes. He also got a chance to fish at the Boys Home, and learn to use the traditional throw-net.



In February, Chiang Rai resident Timmy Merchant and former volunteer, Misa, organized a workshop for the children on the challenges of being a teenager, with a group of hilltribe moderators from Chiang Mai who she knew. It lasted a whole day and included many activities, such as discussing the stages of life and related responsibilities, games that relied on coordination with others, and role-playing.



INTERVIEWS WITH AKHA ELDERS

This is the third part of our series of interviews done by the students during term break. Most students interviewed their own grandparents, so it was also a bonding exercise where they got to learn about their family history, which is important for their self-identity. The questions were:

The interview questions were:

1. Tell me about your life, from when you were little, up till now.
2. What Akha customs are no longer practiced, and why?
3. How is life different now, compared to before?
4. What do Akha youth have now, that you didn't have when you were young?
5. What do you want to say to the new generation of Akha youth?

Meeja Becheku, 65, female, lives in Mae Mon village (interviewed by Nut)



I was born in Burma. Since I was a child, I worked in the fields. We planted rice and corn. I got married in Burma when I was 19. I had my first child when I was 23 but it died. I had my second child at 26. I have a total of 4 children - all boys. When I was 28, I migrated to Mae Mon village. When I arrived here, there was already Lisor hilltribe people living here. [and they still do] Ancestor worship ceremonies are no longer practiced because those who know the ceremonial procedure have died, one by one, and the new generation has not learned the old ceremonial ways.

Before, houses were made of grass thatch and bamboo. Travel was only by foot or by horse, but now we have motorbikes, which make travel easier. There was also no electricity when I was younger. We now have baby diapers and mobile phones to use. Before, my life was very hard. I don't want the new generation of Akha youth to face such hardship. I want them to study hard so they can get the job they want.



To sponsors Kok Hiang, Annette and Bruce, and all our volunteers for their kindness and for spending time with the children.

To Misa and Timmy Merchant and the 3 workshop moderators from Chiang Mai for the beneficial and fun workshop.

*If you would like to VISIT, FUNDRAISE, VOLUNTEER or DONATE
please email us at ayui.foundation@gmail.com
www.ayuifoundation.org*



For donations in Thailand

ธนาคารไทยพาณิชย์
SIAM COMMERCIAL BANK

Acc no: 5072669424

Acc name: Ayui Foundation

