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

# Ayni Foundation NEWSLETTER



Sumalee Milne, OAM Director

#### FROM THE DIRECTOR

January 2023 Chiang Rai, Thailand

Greetings from cold Chiang Rai! This newsletter covers the last few months of 2022, when the children had a lot of fun with various activities, visitors and volunteers – a great end to the year! After a break due to Covid, we were able to do our annual clothes donation again in December, at the village of one of our boys.

Also, out of the blue, we were contacted by Varee International School in Chiang Mai, inviting us to be a part of their Christmas Shoebox Appeal, so I got to play Santa and the children enjoyed opening their presents before going home for the New Year break.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our old and new friends, child sponsors, supporters, donors and volunteers for their generosity and support during 2022, and wish you all the best for 2023.

HAPP ew 9 2023



#### **VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS**



In November, long-time supporter and former Chiang Rai resident Olivia Uahwatanasakul came to volunteer with her friend, Will. They were here during the week of Loy Krathong (Thai festival), so they got to release traditional floating lanterns with the kids and Will bought spectacular fireworks that we set off down the road. It also happened to be Olivia's birthday that week, so the kids made her a card. As the cold season was approaching, Olivia bought blankets for those children who needed them, and they also donated a soccer ball and games.



Misa Mojarrabi, also from Australia, is currently in Chiang Rai doing research under the New Colombo Plan, and asked to volunteer at Ayui after hearing about us while in Chiang Mai. Misa has a lot of volunteer experience and was able to fit in many games and activities, like origami and making earrings. She is also learning Thai, so was able to communicate easily with the kids. We really appreciated Misa taking time out of her busy schedule to volunteer at Ayui.





Another long-time supporter, Hal Radin, visited us from Penang with his girlfriend, Jenny Ho. Jenny taught 2 groups of girls how to crochet, and gifted them the crochet needles and wool she had brought. A few of the girls have already made small bags.



### **ART PROJECT**





Our friends on the Board of the Chiang Mai Expat Club (CMEC) suggested an art project for fundraising, after seeing the children's art work in our previous newsletter. They provided funds for art supplies, and came to visit in November to observe the children paint. Then they selected Christmas-themed and other pictures to be made into Christmas cards, while some paintings were for a silent auction at their annual Christmas dinner. Sales from the beautiful Christmas cards, plus the silent auction, raised over B15,000 for Ayui. We showed our appreciation by treating them to a traditional Akha dance performance.

## **INTERVIEWS WITH AKHA ELDERS**

This is the second part of our series of interviews by the older students, as part of a homework assignment 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:

- 1. Tell me about your life, 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 want to say to the new generation of Akha youth?

#### Ahbiew Meupoh, 78, male, lives in Baan Doi village (Interviewed by Saifon)



I lived in Burma until the age of 38. At that time, in Burma, there was a lot of fighting [government soldiers vs minorities], shooting, it was chaos. It made life hard so I migrated into Thailand. I came by foot. At that time, there was nothing convenient for us, whether it be for travelling or things to use. There was not even electricity. Now, there has been so much change, everything is easier for us. Old customs/ ceremonies like getting rid of bad spirits, giving offerings to field spirits are no longer done because most Akha people have converted to Christianity.

Now, everything is better, more convenient. Even the roads are better, making it easier to travel. Things are more developed, but things are more expensive. We now have phones, TVs, motorbikes, cars, electricity and nice clothes. Akha youth should live their lives going

forward and develop, like how technology has developed. Don't go backwards or just stay where you are, and study to a high level.

## **ANNUAL CLOTHES DONATION**

This year, we held our clothes donation at Ekkaphon's village - Pa Bong Ngam Bon. Thank you to parents of students at Ampai Kindergarten, Chiang Rai, for donating old clothes, toys and shoes.



# THANK YOU



Varee International School in Chiang Mai for their Christmas Shoebox Appeal.

Dave, Tony and Laura from CMEC for visiting, and for buying the last lot of shelves we needed to replace from the flooding. Some of the money raised from the Art Project went to buying new water coolers for both houses to replace the old, rusting ones.



Our friend Hal Radin for covering the cost of our annual rice supply again this year.



Team Hog Rider, again, for their 24-Hr Challenge at Apollo Bay P-12 College, Melbourne, Australia, that raised funds to build our permanent chicken coop. The coop has been built now, and the chickens have been purchased.

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