

The Ayui Foundation is a non-denominational, non-government organisation that provides a home, educational opportunities and future pathways for disadvantaged hill tribe young people.



Director  
Sumalee Milne

# Ayui FY

March 2008  
Chiang Rai, Thailand

## From the Director

Due to popular demand, the children and I went on another fishing trip (this time armed with scuba masks and an ingenious spear-gun, handmade by Suchart). The kids absolutely love getting outside to fish and swim at our local river. We also decided it was time for another field trip so borrowed a truck to go and see the monkeys for the first time at a near by temple. We also stopped in to visit a friend in Sanpasak, an Akha village separated from Burma by a few mountains.

2008 has started off well for The Ayui Foundation, with internet connected at our house, a printer, and another second-hand laptop. We also had some wonderful visitors, who arrived armed with gifts and ideas on how they can support the Foundation.



## Remembering

The Ayui Foundation was recently informed of the passing of Dan Page. Dan visited Thailand three years ago when The Ayui Foundation was only an idea. He listened to the concept of a hostel for Hilltribe kids and out of his love of Thailand and desire to help provided one of our first donations. Since then he would send through cards with his beautiful photography with words of support, encouragement and donations. His faith in this project will not be forgotten – we wish his wife Karin much peace and dedicate this newsletter and our achievements this month to Dan.



FOUNDATION



## *Our First Graduates*

On 7 March I attended the graduation ceremony of Wanpen Bienglae (18yrs) and Buyer Chermer (18yrs) at the Sahasart Suksa School, where 95% of the students are hilltribe. A Grade 9 education is the highest compulsory level for children in Thailand, but often hilltribe kids have to struggle so



much more than Thai kids (financially and educationally) to get that far. Most Thai children are 15 when they finish Grade 9 as they have the advantage of Thai being their first language and often have more support at home including a culture of educational achievement in the family. So graduation was a big thing for our kids!! Our younger children look up to the older girls and can now see we have high expectations for each of them.

It was a special and emotional day, with a few students wiping away tears of pride in their achievement, and sadness at leaving their friends. Six students, in six different hilltribe languages, spoke on stage about how they felt as graduates. Wanpen and Buyer will now start to look for work as they have to help support their families (even though Buyer expressed a desire to study further). They know that, whenever they are in town and need a place to stay, Baan Ayui's doors are always open. It was a proud day for all three of us.

## *Our Field Trip*



On 26 January, we went to Sanpasak village, halfway between Chiang Rai town and Mae Sai District, where the children went for a bush walk to admire the beautiful scenery - the mountains of Burma form an incredible backdrop. While walking we came across an elderly Akha woman shucking baby corn so naturally the kids stopped, chatted and helped her finish the job. Then we went onto the Monkey Cave, where the children were excited to

see real live monkeys up close and in the open. About 80 wild monkeys live in this temple forest area, which also has a pond of the biggest poi-poi and catfish we'd ever seen. We bought some bananas and the boys were brave enough to feed the monkeys even though they were pretty demanding. The children loved watching how the monkeys use their long arms to swing and climb, and were amazed to see baby monkeys clinging upside-down to their mother's stomachs while their mother walked.



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*- our job  
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good  
decisions.*

## *Group Discussion Topics*

Every Sunday, before our weekly house meeting, the Director facilitates a Group Discussion. This is an open forum with our kids on a particular topic, to educate, to gauge their level of knowledge and to have participation in a discussion on a topic relevant to their lives. Our recent topics have been:



### *Gender Roles*

We looked at a list of things people can do, (e.g. cook, fight back, kiss your mother in front of your friends, climb trees), the children were asked to respond either, yes, no or maybe, as to whether they usually do these things. We went through each item and discussed their responses and reasons. They concluded that in the past there were clearly defined gender roles but now most of the activities are okay for both sexes.

### *Decision Making*

This topic was aimed at our two 18-year olds, who just completed high school, as they will now be faced with many decisions about their future. We brainstormed the things that can help us make a decision (e.g. look at the risks, effect on family/future, find out more information, ask an expert or someone you trust). Then I talked about how when you're trying to make a difficult decision it can help to list the advantages and disadvantages, for example, deciding to continue study after high school or get a job. In summary, I said that sometimes it may seem like we don't have options but if we take the time to think rationally, we can often make good decisions or find other, more suitable choices.

### *The Sex Industry*

Again this topic was for the benefit of our oldest girls. As much as I hope that they will never enter the sex industry, in Thailand it remains a financially attractive option for young girls – especially girls without a Thai citizen ID card. First, we brainstormed reasons why girls would do this work, which everyone understood. Then we listed the ways girls can get into this work, both willingly and forcibly, through being deceived into thinking they would be doing a different job. We discussed the risks involved and asked the teenagers why then, knowing the risks, do girls still do this work? They concluded that easy money is a powerful lure, even at the risk of one's life. Also, that some girls liked dressing up and receiving attention from men. We listed the advantages and disadvantages of choosing to do sex work. In conclusion, I told the girls that it is a personal choice, but to think carefully about the risks and their future, and find out as much information as possible when applying for any jobs in case they are tricked into the sex trade. The boys were told to help keep an eye out for their sisters, with the knowledge they learned from this discussion.

## Our Visitors

- Kathy Barnett, Lynn Ciurlionis and Maggie Mitchell from Soroptimist International found time out of their busy schedule to visit the hostel, meet the children and learn more about the Foundation during a brief trip to Chiang Rai.
- Geoffrey Wood and Ken Goodsell from Australian Rotary Clubs joined the children for dinner one evening and showed them a short documentary on beautiful Tasmania.
- Friends of the Director, Anthony and Julianne Cowley, from Canberra, Australia, came to visit the children with gifts of bags, clothing and books donated from St John Vianny's and Sacred Heart Primary schools. They were also able to bring over some supplies from Robyn Cooper and her family for Meenoo their sponsored daughter. The children were very happy with many new toys, games and clothes. Julianne and Anthony have been helping with fundraising in Australia, providing advice to our Board, and compiling our website and newsletters which we have received many compliments on. It was fantastic that they finally were able to meet all the young people they have been supporting - plus it was a good excuse to throw another BBQ dinner that the kids love so much.



## Thank you. . . .

As the Foundation does not receive funding on a regular basis, we rely solely on donations to keep us going. We would not have been able to have accomplished this much without the support and kindness of the following people:

- Thank you to Apita Assayawan, an Akha accountant, for volunteering her time to help with our financial statements.
- Analog Devices Inc., Shanghai Branch, for another second-hand laptop computer.
- Robyn Cooper and the Cooper family from Australia, our latest child sponsor, for making Meenoo feel very special with her new school bag and clothes. Her generosity and thoughtfulness knows no bounds, and Robyn has even donated the funds to buy an Akha outfit for Meenoo (the kids have to wear them to school on Fridays), as her Akha jacket is made from old, faded leftover cloth. In Akha culture, mothers sew and embroider the traditional clothing for their children but Meenoo's mother passed away before she had time to make her clothing.
- Thanks to the North Hobart Rotary Club, Australia, for our printer, art supplies and the volleyball/badminton net.
- Geoffrey Wood and Ken Goodsell for their enthusiasm, generosity and good advice.
- Dennis DiCesare, for sponsoring our internet and phone line costs for the year.
- Roy Hudson, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, who very kindly sent some money for his sponsored child, Wanpen, who has just graduated from high school, to help with her travel, food and accommodation costs while she looks for a job.
- Last but not least, Anthony and Julianne Cowley, for their moral support, advice, and generosity, carrying a whole extra suitcase with them, full of things for the children. A big thanks to Julianne for volunteering her time to do all our colorful newsletters over the past year.

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If you would like to visit, or  
have ideas on how you can  
contribute to The Ayui Foundation  
we would love to hear from you!  
Please contact Sumalee Milne at  
[ayui.foundation@gmail.com](mailto:ayui.foundation@gmail.com)  
[www.ayui.org](http://www.ayui.org)  
Thank you for thinking of us.

Cheques can be made out to 'The Ayui Foundation':  
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