

Projects Abroad Thailand Official Newsletter

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Editor's note

Hello summer break!

It's summer! There's summer warmth all around! There are a lot of things going on this month. The Projects Abroad Community volunteers have done so much to prepare for the school break, for when the children go on holiday. We still prepared some educational spare time where they can learn English and also have fun! Meanwhile the Conservation volunteers also did a lot to conserve the environment in the local areas. This month, we joined local organisations and school students to plant sea grass and mangrove, twice. We also had a few dirty days where our volunteers helped paint the Day Care Center and did beach cleanups almost every week. Besides working at projects, our volunteers also had a chance to experience the Thai culture. There was one special Buddhist holiday, Makha Bucha, held in mid-February. Our volunteers were shown how Buddhists prepare flowers to offer to the Lord Buddha. Also there was a special event held in Krabi town, the Love and Jazz Festival. It was a great opportunity for volunteers to see the Thai culture and experience the music which is not often possible. More details and pictures are to follow on what happened to describe things better than words could ever. Hope everyone enjoys our newsletter and the summer break!

Cheers!

Parichart Chaipikul (Ant)

Country Director

William Thomas from New York



Teaching has been a lot of fun for me. It took a little getting used to but I've enjoyed it a lot. At first I didn't even know how to teach and I started my first day with no idea what to do with the children, how to keep them interested, or what the children would know. Over the past month I think that I've gotten a lot better at teaching as around my second week it started to feel right. Unfortunately, we missed a lot of days in January due to holidays and protests. I'm now comfortable teaching even though I'd never taught anyone besides my friends and family, who could not speak English and never more than a handful of people. When I started I was completely out of my comfort zone; the children who couldn't speak much English was about 20 to 50 in each class. Over the past month my whiteboard handwriting got so much better. It's been a struggle because of how bad my handwriting is in general but it's been good to learn.



When teaching, especially with the younger classes, it's good to be able to be louder than the children you're teaching. With P2 that can be difficult, as they do get a bit excited

and when 7 to 8 year olds get excited they tend to get loud. They're pretty good at being quiet again, when I ask them to be so it's not that big of a deal. They do get tired rather quickly, so it's generally not a good idea to try and teach them for the whole hour class time, games or drawing are good for when they lose focus. P6 is the second hardest class to teach, they're 11 to 12 years old and know more English than what I expected and this pushed me to try new things with them every time. I tried to teach them the months of the year, I wrote them all up and I said January and they started rattling off all the months so we ended up spelling the months as they do have some issues with their spelling. I generally don't have any problems with respect as within the Thai culture they seem to respect teachers a lot. I learned this when a few volunteers and I were at a bar and spoke to a guy, when he found out we were teachers he bowed to us and then only continued the conversation.

I've particularly enjoyed the act of actually teaching children and them remembering what I teach. Not always something you can expect in P1 to P3 students but it still feels nice to ask a question and the children gets it right and you think to yourself, "I taught them that, that was me.....nice!" Outside of class time the overall atmosphere of my school is very nice. The atmosphere is welcoming, respectful, and a bit playful. Even though there's definitely some playing the children generally know that they're here to learn and they take that seriously. It's nice to see the children taking school serious because this isn't always the case in American schools.



Thailand, excluding schools, has been a lot of fun as the people you talk to or just pass and make eye contact with will give you a smile and nod. Of course another highlight of Thailand, for me, has been the food. It's delicious and I enjoy the spiciness although there

have been times it was too spicy. Traveling around Thailand has been a lot of fun as well, so far I've been to Koh Phi Phi, Phuket, and of course Ao Nang which is only about 30 minutes away from Krabi. In Koh Phi Phi the beaches are gorgeous and they had a fire show every night I was there. Ao Nang is nice for its beaches and night life. I've certainly enjoyed my month here so far, and I'm looking forward to the next two.

What happened?

Joining the locals twice in February

- **February Outreach:** *Dirty and muddy fun planting sea grass to support dugong.*

The first event we joined with the community was our February Outreach: Dirty and muddy fun planting sea grass. On Thursday, February the 13th, Projects Abroad volunteers together with the Krabi Administrative Organisation went to Talingshun to plant sea grass which the dugong is heavily dependent on.



- **Global Shark Awareness Campaign and Mangrove Planting**

The second time joining the locals was on our Global Shark Awareness Campaign on the 3rd Friday of February 2014. Projects Abroad volunteers had a special activity at Baan Khao Thong School with 120 students from preschool to primary school.

Total number of students who joined our Global Shark Awareness Campaign from December 2013 to February 2014 was approximately 940 and the total number of schools joining the campaign was 5.

Both mangroves and sea grass play a very important role in the ecology system. They both help filter pollutants and also absorb excess nutrients and trap sediments to increase water quality.



Dirty Day

Painting at the Klong Hin Day Care Center

Projects Abroad volunteers helped paint one of the care placements on the 17th and 18th of February. As the classroom is plain and the center needs people to help make it colorful and wonderful for the young children, Projects Abroad care volunteers who work at the placement helped paint it together with other volunteers. This obviously shows their dedication to help the community.



The draft plan is made by Ernestine from the Netherlands and Sarah from France, two volunteers who work at Klong Hin Day Care Center (where they paint).



Projects Abroad Volunteers clear 500 kg of garbage in Ao Nam Mao



Projects Abroad Conservation volunteers went to Ao Nam Mao to clean up the beach. We, after spending all morning collecting trash, found 500 kilos of trash on the beachside. The most common trash we found were plastic, plastic bags, snack wraps along with bottles and a lot of cigarette butts. We also found truck tires, shaped wood and old nets that the fishermen left on the beach after fishing. Let's hope that our work will inspire people not to throw their trash on the beachside but in trash cans. Trash on the beach will not only affect the beach but also sea animals living underwater. Once this trash is in the sea, turtles or fish might think that it is food and once they consume it, it will block their stomach and cause their death. If they are all dying, humans will no longer have this means of food supply and this will lead to serious consequences. Let's hope that everyone out there hears and sees what we are doing and helps us keeping the beaches clean.



National holiday

When the day of love connects with Makha Bucha



Have you heard of the story about the blooming lotus?

Imagine that you are one of the lotus seeds and were buried beneath a muddy pond. You are surrounded by mud. However, above you, above the dirt pond, is fresh air and lovely sunshine. You are not disappointed as you begin your way upwards towards the surface.

With your determined heart, you begin wiggling in the earth. Your roots grow deeply underneath the mud. Your tiny little stem is slowly growing up. Suddenly, you pop out of the mud! Your stem begins to grow higher and taller. You are slowly rising up, trying to get off the muddy brown water. All at once, you made your way above the water surface! You reach the bright and beautiful sunshine! Now you are white, fragrant and beautiful, standing above the water facing your face towards the incredibly amazing sky.

The determination of the lotus getting out of the muddy pond reminds everyone who sees it, of the Lord Buddha and his journey to Enlightenment.

Projects Abroad volunteers attended a cultural workshop last on the 13th February. It was nine full months after the Buddha got the Enlightenment, on the full moon day of the 6th lunar month, 45 years before the Buddhist era. Makha Bucha Day this year was on the same day as

Valentine's Day. This mean the day of love was given a pure spiritual touch through Makha Bucha, one of the most important days for Buddhists.



On that day Projects Abroad volunteers learned how to fold lotus to make it a blooming lotus before offering it to the Lord Buddha. Traditionally Buddhists go to the temple to make merit and give some offerings to the monks. The offerings could be anything from flowers to food and the most well-known flower to offer is lotus. The lotus represents purity. That is why it is widely used in holy rituals in Buddhism.

What's special?
Dining with the “homies”



What is the most memorable experience when volunteering aboard?

To me I think friendship and mutual understanding with the locals are the most two important things. Last week, one of our volunteers was invited to Koh Klang, a small and lovely Muslim village in Krabi, to have dinner with one of the staff at their placement. It was a special dinner that they cook and invited their family and friends to come and eat. Not only a volunteer was invited but also Projects Abroad staff members. So we took a long tail boat cross the river to where they lived. It was a fun time for our volunteer as she stayed in town with another host family so it was her first day on the Muslim island. We arrived and our dinner was already prepared. We had beef curry which tasted so delicious. The smell of herbs made us hungry as soon as we arrived. We also had some amazing omelets to reduce the spiciness of the curry.



Before we ate, the host learnt about French traditions. Sarah, our care volunteer from France brought a bouquet with her and gave it to the family. She told us that it was a French tradition that if you're invited to dinner, you should bring flowers to thank the family. This was a win-win situation as our volunteer learnt about the Muslim culture and way of life of people in Koh Klang and tried the food, meanwhile the host also learnt about Western culture. This is a great experience to exchange knowledge on differences of cultures. Obviously the dinner made the night! Everyone was happy to spend time and learn more about each other. Open yourself and your heart to learn about others; it is the best way to live, learn and travel.

Krabi Love & Jazz from 28th of February to 2nd March



This three-night musical festive presents the ideal jazz music event of the year!

With 20 bands and artists playing Jazz, Bossa Nova, Pop and more from cool artists like Jennifer Kim, Joom Nareekrajang, Charas Fuang-arrom, Tuuth Nantida, Pop Pongkool and Aof Pongsak, with delicious food from high class restaurant and professional chefs. Also featuring at the event is an art exhibition.

Phonics Reading Clinic held by Teaching Volunteers



On Tuesday the 11th and Wednesday the 12th of March, Projects Abroad teaching volunteers, William Thomas from New York, Normandie from the UK, Rebekka from Norway, Sophie from France and Karen from Denmark held a Phonics Reading Clinic at Bainaichongmittrapab 123 school. The aim of this clinic is to help improve the children's pronunciation of words. The activities included phonics songs, reading from flashcards and games. First the volunteers led the students to sing and then they picked up flash card and let some students volunteer to read them out loud. After the end of two sessions, it was game time! The students were divided into two teams to compete with each other. The volunteers would say a word and the students had to guess the sound and they go out and write on the white board. At the end of the day the children at least could pronounce the sound 'h' correctly. In Thai, the way children pronounced 'h' is different from how native speakers pronounce it.