

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



# Ayui

## From the Director

Baan Ayui, the hostel established by The Ayui Foundation, has been up and run-ning for two months now. What started as an empty, quiet house has been turned into a furnished, loving, home environment that often resounds with the sound of laughter and singing. The kids have already been able to enjoy fruit from the mature fruit trees in the spacious front yard. To complete the home, the cutest chocolate-colored puppy was given to us and the kids named her 'Anyi' (which means 'younger sister' in Akha). Anyi has so much energy and loves playing with the kids and chasing their football. Her antics always make the children laugh, and they are learning to be more responsible by training and caring for her.

### *Our Wonderful Volunteer*

It was great to have our first volunteer Honore Schreurs (31) from Holland come to spend time with the kids and help out for three weeks. On his last day, he rented a motorbike and went to visit one of the boy's villages for a day as he wanted to visit an Akha village before he left. For his last night, he took everyone out for all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ, which was enjoyed by all. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Honore (or Joe, as the kids named him when they found it too hard to pronounce his name), on behalf of our young people, for the radio/CD player, his time, patience and sense of fun, for teaching them how to sing 'Country Road' and just for being their funny friend.



FOUNDATION



*Baan Ayui - Chiang Rai Thailand  
Inset Ayi with puppy Anyi*

## Honore's Story

Hi! I am Honore Schreurs from the Netherlands (Thai nickname Jo) and I had the great honour to be the first volunteer for the Ayui Foundation. I spend a little more than three weeks with the children. I was planning to stay about two weeks, but I stayed the absolute maximum there before my flight out of Thailand, and I was very sad I could not stay longer. From this and from the fact that every day I was with the children I found it hard to go away again you can conclude I had a GREAT time. Why? Because the Ayui children are GREAT children, the house is perfect and also housemother Noi and director Sue were great to work with. And I am usually not the kind of person who says the word great! :) I have been traveling for ten months, including volunteering two months in Peru as well, but this was definitively my best experience, perhaps of my whole trip!

So what did I do? Since I already mentioned that I loved being in the house when the children were there, I arrived at the house soon after they come back from school at about 4.30-5 o'clock. Between then and dinner at 6 every day was different. Sometimes playing *takraw* or volleyball with the older boys, sometimes playing memory or games the children made from fruit pits or ice-cream sticks with young Yohan or Fa (and whoever wanted to join), and sometimes I would tutor the older girls for an English assignment they had in school.

At 6pm every day I ate with the children and enjoyed the delicious and healthy Thai, Akha or Lahu creations of Noi and the child whose turn it was to help cook. After dinner I usually prepared English classes, which I gave between 7 and 8pm. In the three weeks I saw a lot of progress, so the teaching was very satisfactory. After class some children would come to make sure they understood everything, and I would continue with the ones who did not have homework.

During the days I sometimes helped Noi by going to the supermarket for heavy things, taking the puppy to the vet, or attending a meeting in the house. Also I helped Sue with some research on many different areas or updated files needed for the foundation. But I had plenty of time doing my own things as well. On the weekends I basically was in the house all weekend. As activities, I did some serious gardening with the children, taught music (singing and basic rhythm exercises, a lot of sports with everyone, going to the river to catch dinner with our hands - which they did!!) and of course a lot of fun activities with smaller groups.

Thank you Sue for giving me the opportunity to volunteer for your organisation. I wish you all the best, and I will for sure keep following The Ayui Foundation. **Honore**



*Thank you to Honore for three weeks volunteering, games, songs and fun.*

**Ayui  
(pronounced  
a-yeu)  
is an Akha  
word for  
older sister  
and  
Baan Ayui  
means our  
older sister's  
house.**

**The  
hostel is  
based on the  
concept of a  
nurturing  
and  
understand-  
ing older  
sister who  
provides  
guidance  
and  
support on  
all levels.**



*Moving into Baan Ayui was an amazing busy week where the young people met each other and played getting to know you games to help settle in.*

## *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.

## *Topics for 'thinking'*

1) Respect – what are qualities you respect? Can you respect someone with low education? Would you still respect someone in a high position if they did something illegal?

2) Democracy – what is it? What are the benefits of everyone having a say? - A brief outline of the current state of Thai politics – agreement that the hostel is to be run democratically, with everyone getting a say.

3) Opportunities and Consequences – A smart person knows when to take opportunities - make the most of your opportunities, don't squander them – when opportunities occur to do something bad (eg. theft, using drugs), you should resist the temptation by thinking of the consequences.

# Cleaning &

*Each week formal house meetings are held where jobs are discussed, good behaviour is rewarded and any problems are solved.*



# house meetings



*Director, Sumalee Milne with the boys*

## *Health Issues*

One of our boys, Asor, developed sores and scabs on his ankle, due to scratching and infecting a mosquito bite. When two of the other boys developed the same sores, it was time to see the doctor. The boys are now using a cream that has already reduced the inflammation and they are healing well. It is currently the monsoon season in Thailand, when the mosquitoes come out in full force by early evening and malaria is common during this season. We decided it was necessary to install two doors with mosquito netting – at the front entrance and the kitchen entrance – to reduce the risk of malaria.

The boys were showing off their muscles to our volunteer Honore and held a few arm-wrestling matches. A match between two of our strongest boys, Acheu and Ayi, went for several minutes. About a week later, Ayi's elbow had swollen and it hurt to straighten his arm. The doctor said it was sprained due to the arm-wrestling. He is taking medication and the swelling has gone down.

## Citizenship and other Hilltribe Issues

· Noi, the housemother, is looking into getting the kids their free health care cards, or 'Gold cards'. This entitles them to free health care at the Chiang Rai Provincial Hospital (government hospital). The hospital says non-Thai citizens are not eligible, however, Asor has had a Gold card for a while now, so we still need to get more information in this.

· Noi's father was also arrested beginning of June on charges of farming public forest land that he does not have legal ownership of. Noi says he has been farming that plot on and off for the last ten years and never been arrested. He had to get together enough money to pay bail, and is waiting to be called to trial for farming on land that he has been farming for the last ten years. In Thailand, if you can prove that you have been farming land for ten years, it can be considered legally yours, but he simply has no proof of this.

· Asor's father was arrested on June 9 for using a BB, or pellet, gun in the forest. The kids say the police don't arrest them for this so it must have been a soldier who arrested him. His father had to spend a night in jail, and Asor's sister came to pick him up that night to join the family at home for a traditional Akha prayer ceremony for their father. They managed to come up with B20,000 bail money – money that could have been spent on food and clothing.

· At the end of June, Wanpen and Buyer went back to their District office to meet their families and apply for their 'pink cards'. These are ID cards for hilltribe people who do not have Thai citizenship but at least they have some sort of legal ID now. Asor's family received theirs, so he now holds a 'pink card.' These are meant to be free, however, often village Headmen request money to travel to the District office, cost of meals, if the process takes several hours, and just for helping coordinate the application, even though this is something they should consider their (non-paid) duty to their villagers. The price that is demanded by Headmen vary, and Buyer had to pay



Many Akha people lack proper legal documentation to make them eligible for Thai citizenship and are considered illegal immigrants, even in the country of their birth.

## Future Plans

The Starfish Country Home Foundation, based in Thailand, has given The Ayui Foundation a grant of B40,000 to build the boys' dorm room. Six boys are currently cramped into one upstairs bedroom. It will be built on the side of the house, made in traditional Akha style using bamboo and thatch. It will also have a bathroom, as we have found that two bathrooms are not enough for eleven kids. We are waiting for the end of the monsoon season to call some of the boys' fathers to come down from their mountain villages and help build the boys room, which they have agreed to do. (One of them is a village house builder).

## Thank you . . . .

We would not have been able to have accomplished this much without the support and generosity of the following people:

- ✓ Khun Ratre of the Khom Loy Development Foundation for our house bond of two months' rent.
- ✓ Josie and Christophe from Christophe's Restaurant, Canberra, Australia for holding a fundraising dinner to help purchase furniture.
- ✓ Sacred Heart and St John Vianney's Primary Schools, Canberra, Australia that raised money to cover the cost of school uniforms, including boy scout and girl guides uniforms, and P. E. uniforms for all the kids.

Noi and her beautiful daughter Fah

## More people to thank....

- ✓ Lawyers Khun Kritar for free financial advice and Khun Kriangsak for free legal advice and getting us legally registered.
- ✓ Members of the Pan Pacific South East Asian Women's Association (PPSEAWA) for donations towards furnishing the house, as well as members of the Australia-Thailand Association (ATA), Canberra.
- ✓ Our first two child sponsors – Diane Hertz from Canada and Roy Hudson from Chiang Mai.
- ✓ The Starfish Country Home Foundation for a grant to build the boy's room.
- ✓ Financial donations from Dan Page, Victoria McColm, Nim Osborne and Jip (also donated a sack of rice for the first week the kids moved in).
- ✓ Greg Balster and Carrie Grace from the US, who donated some furniture and household items when they left Chiang Rai.
- ✓ Pat Schmidt for gorgeous, playful little Anyi who will grow up together with the kids, who loves them unconditionally, and who will hopefully turn into a bit of a guard dog as she gets older.
- ✓ Wendy Brown, the 'traveling grandmother', originally from New Zealand, who has an Akha daughter-in-law and is a regular visitor at the hostel, bringing sweets, fruit and milk to the kids. She is an advisor on the Board, providing moral support and positive energy. The kids call her 'Api gala' which she is known as in her daughter-in-laws' village and it means 'grandmother from far away'

Currently The Ayui Foundation does not receive any government funding. As a small non-profit organisation we operate from private donations and longer-term child sponsorships. If you would like to contribute to an organisation and know that your gift is making a difference please contact Sumalee Milne at [ayui.foundation@gmail.com](mailto:ayui.foundation@gmail.com)

- ✓ Last, but not least, Anthony Cowley and Julianne Bradley, who went back to Australia and have worked tirelessly to promote The Foundation and provided the Director with moral support and advice during its inception. Julianne is working on the website and is an advisor on the Board.

## Our Language Classes...

- ✓ A big thank you to Ajarn Chintana Sandilands, a Lecturer at the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University.

Ajarn Chintana decided to hold Introductory Thai language and Culture classes and the fees from the lessons have been donated to The Ayui Foundation.

Khop Khun Kha to Ajarn Chintana and best wishes to her students – Gary Woodbridge, Tony Pintori, Keith Hodgins, Derek Hodgins, and Rae Ball.



Thank you for thinking of us.