

JOURNAL

Nr. 1

Dear sponsors, friends and supporters of School for Life, Chiang Mai. We are proud to present our first journal. With this journal we wish to keep you up to date with events and activities at the school, as well as to give you some insight into the daily routine. In focus are the events in the lives of the children and their development.

All this could not be accomplished without the great support of a number of persons, who committed to working and living at the school. In the first part of the following, some of them shall be introduced to you.

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An Introduction



Thaneen “Khun Joy“ Worravitayakun

Co-founder of the School for Life and new mother to the children. She facilitated the start of the project by donating the school’s compound, which before was used as a holiday home for her family from Chiang Mai. In 2006 she was awarded “Mother of the Year” at Chiang Mai city hall.



Prof. em. Dr. Jürgen Zimmer

Co-founder of the School for Life, new father to the children and president of INAgGmbH at the Free University of Berlin, which supports the project ever since the start.



Dominique Leutwiler

General manager of the School for Life. Together with her four children she lives in Chiang Mai for several years already. She is founder of the Topstone company. She worked School for Life since mid-2006.

Yothin Somanonont

Responsible for the educational department. He has been with School for Life since 2004. Currently he is doing his thesis about curriculum development at the School for Life, supported by a scholarship of the Shaul and Hilde Robinsohn Foundation, Berlin.

Prof. Dr. Wanpen Tirachinda

She was born in Thailand and worked as a professor at American universities for many years. At the school for life she holds the position of the educational consultant, concerned especially with the educational and psychological development of the teachers at the school.



Mareike Potrykus

She is in charge of the communication with the godparents, as well as responsible for looking after the guests and volunteers that stay at the site. She has been working with the school since October 2006. Before this she spent five months in 2004/2005 here, in order to accomplish her thesis in sociology about the community of School for Life.



Current Situation

Currently, 140 children of many different backgrounds live at the school. Some of them are ethnic minority children, whose parents are on the run, because they can't get a residence permit in Thailand. Some others have parents who are so poor that they can't afford to feed their children themselves, or to send them to school.

Living here, there are also children who used to live in the streets. In 2005, after the tsunami, they were joined by children from southern Thailand, who had survived the wave, but lost everything else.

Together they built a new community in the School for Life. Thanks to Khun Joy, her strength and love, they received the chance to start this new life. And then there are Yothin, the principal, and the many teachers, who don't just act as teachers, but as mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters and friends...

Development of the School

In October 2004 the official opening of School for Life took place. Previously 15 children had already been living with Khun Joy and Dr. Zimmer, but they had still gone to school in the nearby village.

School for live has been recognized by the government as a social welfare school since May 2006. The educational concept, developed by Juergen Zimmer, focuses on the economic independence of the children from an early age. Aim is, to strengthen the children's personality and their innovative entrepreneurial ideas, in order to make them independent from the job-market.

At the moment our school spans from kindergarten to grade 8, however, it is planned to expand the curriculum up to grade 12, in order to enable the children to graduate from high school and to enroll in university programs. At Ubon Ratchathanee University, in the East of Thailand, an entrepreneurship program is going to be established, in order to cater their needs.

Events and Activities

Valentine's Day

by Daniel Blank (volunteer)

We, the volunteers were planning a Valentine's Day party. The preparations were very busy: the children exchanged their badminton racquets to scissors and helped cutting out large red paper-hearts for the decoration. Often we would sit at the pond of one of the guest bungalows and listen to music together.

One day I experienced something that had a bizarre effect on me: While I was busy cutting, I noticed a bunch of boys doing something at the pond. I was somewhat surprised, when I saw one of the boys, holding a dead fish in his hand and attempting to break it in two, while the others watched. After telling them to stop, Jom explained to me that they wanted to release the eggs from the dead fish so that there would be more new fish in the pond. Impressed with this action, I kept observing them, however, with an uneasy feeling in my stomach. A bit of a strange but also appropriate valentine's story, in my opinion: the pond is now crowded with little fish.

The water experience - A rally about the previous weeks' lessons

By Susanne Strigel (volunteer)

After two weeks of class on the topic of water, the volunteers decided to arrange a rally on the campus, based on the lesson's learning. Students of all grades (each station was divided to accommodate the younger ones and the older ones), equipped with pencil and paper set off in groups of four. The younger ones jealously tackled the rally at high tempo.

One of the stations required the use of their English knowledge, as they had to identify the brown soup we had placed there as "dirty water" and the clean one as "drinking water". At another station by the stream they had to find an answer to the question of who is fishing (the fisherman!). Everybody became creative when they had to come up with different uses of water. From washing clothes, to brushing teeth to cooking food, to cleaning wounds - a large range of correct answers were found on sheets of paper later on. Noting down three animals that live in the ocean, also was of no great difficulty to the students - although there was one or two somewhat strange English spellings. However, maybe us German volunteers just didn't know the proper

English spelling... Once in a while we were begged for an answer to a question and it was very difficult not to give in to the cute little faces.

Just before lunch all students rushed back to hand in their sheets. The evaluation and presentation of the three highest scoring groups took place two days later in English class.

World Harmony Run

A group of 20 long distance runners were expected for a visit - an international group of friends who are running around the globe, with the one message: "No matter where you come from, no matter what religion you practice, no matter what the color of your skin is - we are all one family."



Our children decided, they wanted to meet them outside the campus and then to run back to the school together with them. Even if at 2 pm it is so hot that even walking is exhausting, all the runners and children still made their way to school and were happily welcomed with a glass of water. Afterwards a quizz for the children was held, to guess what country each runner is from. This was followed by a magician show. Finally, the runners received pictures the children had drawn

for children in Indonesia, which the runners were going to take along and to hand them over once they had got there.

The runners said farewell with the words "Thank you so much for having us. This is by far the most beautiful school we've visited on our run across the globe so far."

Everyday Life

The Girl With the Backpack

By Mareike Potrykus

Guests are visiting the farm. One woman tells her husband "Look at that little girl with that huge backpack, and in this heat as well." The little girl always draws attention from everybody as she always walks around with her large pink backpack, hanging all the way down to her knees. But the visitor's concerns are eased as they hear the story about the backpack: The little girl hasn't been at the school for very long yet, she is from the streets of Chiang Mai. Her parents are alcoholics and they didn't care for her and her little sister. The children were always home alone. The girl couldn't go to school, since she had to stay home to care for her little sister.

The little girl is very proud of her very own backpack and doesn't want to let it out of her sight for one second. In class she's always very attentive and engaged, and during activities she is always willing to try something new.

Excursion to the pool

For Juergen Zimmer's birthday, a pool trip was organized. Everybody ready to leave at 1 pm: 140 children, teachers, volunteers and workers gathered at the gate. One of the volunteers forgot her camera and had to quickly run back to get it. As she returned, she saw three large buses rolling up. Three pickups from the school were also standing ready. Everybody climbed one of the vehicles and the caravan set off.

At the pool, the first ones are already in the water before the last car had parked. Big or small, everybody had a great time cooling off at the pool, although the TV on the side was also a welcome distraction: A very nice and relaxed ambience.

Afterwards everybody was treated to buffet and karaoke across the street. What would a party be without karaoke? For Thais it would be unimaginable.

