



*Live for
art...
Thai
Youth
Theater
spreads
the love*

Mark Del Greco (123) is only happy if he gets to wear a dress.

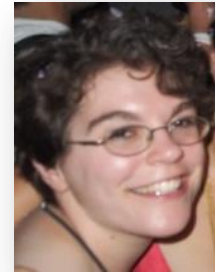
Inside... Family, the Philippines, Paintbrush Diplomacy,
Reducing Waste, AIDS Day, Welcome 124/Farewell 122

Sticky Rice

The Peace Corps Thailand Newsletter February 2012

Notes from the editors...

Working on Sticky Rice for the past year or so has been a lot of fun. David and I got to remake it in our image (that is to say, humorous) and were able to foist a lot of work off on Denise and Jeff. All in all, my ideal situation. I know the current and future editors will continue to make this silly newsletter even more fun to read, to the point where we'll have to retire our catchphrase, "The most popular newsletter nobody reads!" Thanks for reading everyone, and good luck!



- Kari



Editing Sticky Rice was half fun and half awesome (awesome, as is well-known, is fun warmed-over, then exploded.) See you all on the other side...of Peace Corps!

- David



"Just the two of us... we can make it if we try..." Ok, sounded better in my head. We will miss Kari and David's guidance and wisdom in the Sticky Rice posse, and wish them all the best in their refreshingly witty futures. Soon enough we will begin recruiting unsuspecting 124 volunteers to join our team. Until then, we hope you enjoy this issue and be sure to get to our special Welcome



124s/Farewell 122s contributions at the end of this issue. We just had to prolong our goodbyes til the last possible moment. On that note, good luck! Group 124, may your bowels adjust to new fare, and Group 122, may your armpits finally stop sweating in the shower!

- Denise and Jeff

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Proverbial Thailand:

Traditional Thai proverbs and their explanations scattered throughout Sticky Rice come from the book *Thai Proverbs: With Their Literal Meanings* collected by Abha Bhamorabutr. The book was handed down to current volunteers from a 1966-1968 volunteer. As you come across these words of wisdom, you may wonder how you ever survived without them.

February 2012

Results:

The Sticky Rice Survey

We want to thank everyone who participated in our Sticky Rice survey. The information you gave us will help us try to make Sticky Rice better for you. We want to share the results with you briefly:

What do you want to read about in Sticky Rice?

41 people answered, 1 person skipped

82.9% Travel articles
65.9% Personal essays
63.4% News articles
56.1% Volunteer profiles
48.8% Work-related articles
39.0% Staff interviews
22.0% Book reviews
19.0% Fiction/creative

If you have not contributed to Sticky Rice in the past, why not?

27 people answered, 15 skipped

33.3% I don't like to write
22.2% Didn't think my ideas would 'fit'
18.5% I don't have any ideas
18.5% I have contributed in the past
7.4% I don't want anyone to read my writing
0.0% I don't like Sticky Rice

Some of you answered "other" to the first two questions, and included that you want to see more recipes, photographs and an advice column, and that you don't write because you are too busy or too lazy (by 'lazy' we assume you mean too preoccupied with IRBing).

The final question (answered by 25 people, skipped by 17) asked for your individual suggestions about how to make Sticky Rice better. We received suggestions that varied from making Sticky Rice longer to shorter and everything in between. What most of you agreed on was that you want more pictures and more diversity in your articles.

We hear you and we want to make Sticky Rice better for you! We want to make it easier to read on your computer and with your limited internet connection, and provide you with a mix of humorous/serious/interesting/informative articles. However, we need YOU in order to do that! Remember that YOU are the source of all of our articles and photographs so please, continue to send us your travel advice, work ideas, personal stories, photographs and recipes to share with other volunteers! If you want to write but need some ideas, contact your friendly editors and we will be happy to help you brainstorm!

Thank you for your responses, and to everyone who has contributed so far, and keep up the great work!

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Essays:

The Funeral I Didn't Go To

By Kari Greenswag

If your Peace Corps experience has been anything like mine, you've been to a lot of funerals. At the beginning of my service I only knew someone died by the usual signs: bright lights, monks chanting, and free food being handed out. Later, people would tell me when and where to show up, and again, bright lights, monks chanting and free food, but I would make myself useful. Hand out food, water, gather up used dishes and even cut up fruit if the family trusted me with something as important as knives. I was told to go to the cremation ceremony, guided through the process, and now I've been to so many that I know it all by heart.

There was one funeral that I didn't go to, however, and it was likely one of the most important ones. It was the funeral of my papa, my dad's father, and he died about a week before I left for Thailand back in 2010.



Sid Greenswag, Kari's grandfather.

To be honest, I don't think about it much, but I was sitting outside in the sweltering sun at the funeral of a good friend's mother and the whole thing popped into my head. I saw how much she hurt, and it brought to my mind the decline and eventual death of my papa. I couldn't get it out of my mind. And I couldn't stop thinking about all the funerals I've been to here, yet I didn't go to his.

There are reasons of course. I'm emotionally aware enough to realize that going to a funeral a week before leaving for two years probably would have devastated me, likely to the point where I couldn't have made it onto the plane, let alone through PST. There's something so raw, so prying about funerals that leaves many, myself included, wrecked.

Besides, I knew that Papa would've hated for me to put my chance at Peace Corps in jeopardy for him. We were able to Skype before he left us, and I saw that he was fading, but he perked up now and again with a sarcastic barb showing us he was all still in there. And more, he was proud of me. Proud of my accomplishments at school. Proud that I was brave enough to leave it all behind and go on this wild adventure. Proud that a grandchild of a Polish-Jew auto-parts dealer from Des Moines, Iowa, was doing something he never would have dreamed of doing.

My father came back just before I had to get on the plane to our staging in LA, and he told me about the funeral. About the kind words said, the love for my papa, and the twenty-one gun salute he received. I knew I couldn't have handled it, but all the same, I still wish I had gone. But that's life. It's a constant choice, what to do, what not to do, and at the end of it all, you

hope that you have as few regrets as possible. As much as I regret not being there at his funeral, what would I have been there for really? Putting his body in the ground. His soul, his quintessence, spirit, whatever you call it, had already gone, and I had already said good-bye to that part of him.

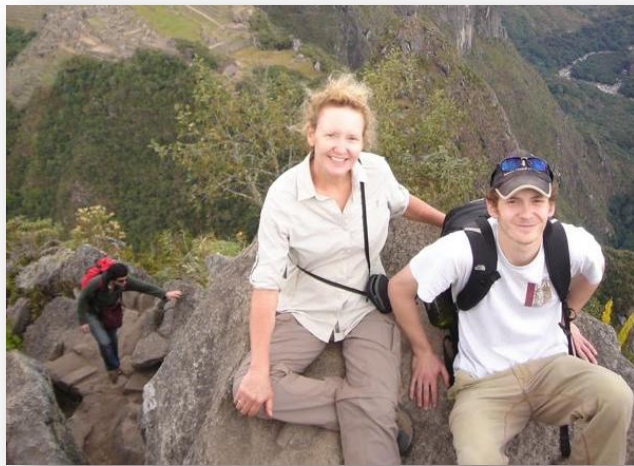
At my friend's mother's funeral, I thought about these things, growing maudlin. Then I thought about one morning of training as I was biking to my language class. I was going past a temple with the sun low and red in the sky, fog not yet completely burned off and everything quiet now that the roosters were all crowed out. I remember stopping to take a picture and thinking, "Papa, I wish you could have seen this."

And that, more than anything, is what I regret. I wish he had been able to see just one picture of the amazing place that I would be living in for the next two years, and know that I would be alright. How could I not be alright? I'm his granddaughter, after all, and our family, well, we always make it through.

Now, at the end of my service, I like to think that I didn't just do Peace Corps for myself (though I did), or for the even more lofty goal of helping the people of Thailand (though I hope I did), but also for my papa. So here's to you, Sid Greenswag, because when times were hard and I wanted to quit, sometimes I would think of you, and I knew I couldn't quit. Thanks for helping to pull me through, Papa.

Apple and Tree Join Peace Corps

By Deborah Fell



Deborah and her son Justin on a trip to Peru.

If the old adage that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree can apply to Peace Corps, then it might explain why my son, Justin, and I will both be serving in Peace Corps at the same time.

However, in this case, it was the apple shaking the tree that led to this turn of events. Let me explain.

As you know, I am part of Group 123 serving in Thailand. In June, Justin will be heading out to begin service in Costa Rica. This all started a few years back when Justin was trying to resolve the big question of what to do with his life.

He had taught English in Chile for a year and been working with different youth organizations in Chicago, but how to bring those experiences and interests together? Grad school was one possibility, but he was not certain where to focus the degree. Peace Corps kept coming up and he and I had long conversations about the pros and cons/ whys and why nots of joining. Peace

Corps seemed like a good way to explore options, gain new perspectives, and do worthwhile work, all at the same time.

I, meanwhile, was working at a Chicago art college, supporting the creative work of other people, but not pursuing any of my own. At my age, I wanted to be doing something that had more meaning, both personally and, hopefully, on a broader level. It was during discussions with Justin that I came to realize I, too, could join Peace Corps and that many of the reasons under “pro” and “why” worked for me. This was a revelation! I jumped into the application process and eventually received an invitation to go to Thailand.

Justin delayed his Peace Corps decision for some months and continued to work in Chicago. He finally did apply and is excitedly anticipating service as a Youth Development Volunteer. With his work experience and insights, enthusiasm, and excellent Spanish, I know the youth of Costa Rica will be in good hands.

Will serving in Peace Corps fulfill Justin’s and my (and Peace Corps’) goals? Time will tell. It is ironic that, after all the talk, for a few months anyway, we will be serving simultaneously, although half way around the world from each other. In closing, and not to mix too many metaphors, I just want to send a big thanks to the apple for inspiring the tree to quit gathering moss. *Kccp kun ka!*

Book Reviews

by Jeff Jackson

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell

Ever wonder why Asian kids are so good at mathematics? Did Bill Gates get to where he is on his own cunning and intelligence? Aside from starting at an early age, what’s the real trick to being a great hockey player? Should you feel edgy if your airplane pilot is Thai? All of these questions are answered in *Outliers*. Malcolm Gladwell puts in-depth psychology in simple terms to make the reader feel like the genius.

Gladwell explains how people of great status get to where they are and it isn’t on their own. It’s a series of fortunate circumstances as well as about 10,000 hours of hard work. *Outliers* is a fast, easy and fascinating read. There is a copy or two floating around the Peace Corps lounge library as well as on “The Kindle File”.

I’m a Stranger Here Myself by Bill Bryson

Miss the United States? After reading *I’m a Stranger Here Myself*, you’ll either miss it more or be glad you’re in Thailand. Bryson, with his usual great humor, wrote a number of columns about America for a London magazine after living in England for two decades.

The travel narrative author shows the good and not-so-good of the states with an accurate, humorous and truthful eye. Bryson compares the United States with the United Kingdom and rarely will the reader lose interest or a smile. *I’m a Stranger Here Myself* can be spotted around the PC library and also be found on “The Kindle File”.

Mom and Dad Visit, Tables Turn

By Jeff Jackson

I don't know how they did it for 18 years. I could barely get through a week. My mom and dad came to visit recently and for once, *they* were *my* responsibility. I met them at the airport and escorted them around the country from Bangkok to Khai Yai National Park, Surin, my site in Sangkha and then back to Bangkok. I bought bus tickets, cooked meals, talked to taxi drivers, ordered in restaurants, bargained at markets and tried to translate what the *yais* – with mouthfuls of beetle juice – were saying in the *song teeo*. It was exhausting.



Jan, Jeff and Jim Jackson at their hotel in Surin.

I'd been picturing this week for years. Ever since I told my parents I wanted to join the Peace Corps, they told me they'd come visit me no matter where it was. When they heard it was Thailand, they were a bit relieved knowing they wouldn't have to travel to a more remote location like Mongolia, Zambia or Turkmenistan.

I saw myself speaking a foreign language and my parents being amazed of what was coming out of their son's mouth. This did happen, but the amazement seemed to quickly go from, "Wow,

Proverbial Thailand:

Do not try to break a knife handle on your knee.

The proverb is used to describe the man who tries to do the impossible things and has an opinion about what should not be done. As you know the knife handle is made of hard wood, not to be broken by your knee. We conclude that not to do the things which are impossible.

listen to Jeff speak!" to, "Jeff, what are they saying to me?" to which the answer was either, "They like your white skin," or, "I don't know, it's in Khmer."

Despite my exhaustion from responsibility, my mom and dad enjoyed the trip. They reminded me of the adventure I lead every day with the little things. While I've taken the 15-kilometer *song teeo* drive dozens of times and only wish for the rare quick ride home, my parents loved when we stopped for giant bags of rice to throw on the back of the tiny truck that's already carrying 20 passengers. They could only comment, "Can you believe this?!" All I could think was, "Yes, I can."

I tip my hat to all those parents, including my own, out there. I don't know how you do it. I can see why lives transform so aggressively after the birth of a child.

How could they not? My mom and dad spent 18 or so years watching over me and my well being. I did it for a week. It makes me appreciate what they did for me all the more.



Correction!

Sticky Rice would like to plead human error in failing to spot 123 volunteer Kelly Peterson in this photo from the Dec 2011 article “Reaching Out to 123 PST Families Affected by Flood: An interview with Julia Schulteis.”

Kelly blended in with some sunshine... not surprising given his always sunny disposition. No sarcasm intended. Sorry, Kelly!

Confession

By David Barron

I joined the Peace Corps to escape The Great Recession.

There, I said it.

I figured I could either be a disgruntled unemployed youth in America, or a disgruntled employed youth in a foreign land. I’d be disgruntled either way—gruntlility is not my style—but at least I’d be *employed*, which is the style to which I’d become accustomed until the Powers That Be decided to screw us all.

I expected I’d hang out for two years, watch the news, polish up that ole’ résumé turd, cultivate LinkedIn connections. Maybe I’d write a best-selling terrible-travelogue à la “The Sex Lives of Cannibals”, become rich, famous, respected by men, loved by women. Then I’d leverage buyout my experience and convert it to the junk bonds of working in America. Beats sitting in a tent occupying whatever there is left, right?

Turns out that didn’t happen.

Turns out Thailand happened.

Turns out I like Thailand.

Turns out I love *being* American, but I love *living* in Thailand.

Turns out, here I am with one month to go and I’ve already got a plan to come back, and something to come back *to*. Something that, for the first time in a well-traveled life, is *interesting*.

In a good way.

I spent twenty-four months actually being useful for something besides taking up space, keeping myself amused, and providing myself beer money. That’s a feeling I won’t soon sacrifice.

Anyways, The Great Recession is *still* on.

...c’mon!

The Curious Cultural Parameters of Fun:

aka I Survived the Thai Bus Trip

By Kelly Peterson

Let me preface this story by saying there are many things I love about Thailand and my experience here: the meals and tasty fruit, the weather, the beaches, the people, and the pretty girls. When I was told by my *nayoke* a couple months ago that everyone in the SAO and council members from the villages would be traveling by karaoke bus to visit an herb farm followed by a trip to Koh Samet, I was pretty excited.

When I mentioned this to other volunteers, however, they, well, I wouldn't say they warned me, but made casual suggestions about ear plugs and battery life on my iPod for the trip. Last Wednesday night I was all packed up to go and fully stocked with music and podcasts to keep me entertained. I actually don't mind the long bus rides since it gives me a chance to do some reading and listening to music while I look out at all the pretty Christmas lights in the countryside.

As we departed at around 8 pm with a couple quick stops just outside the village at some *wats* followed by a quick stop at somebody's house who then proceeded to get on the bus for a quick speech, we were then on our way. As we moved on, we were generously provided with speeches from a couple more people and a quick introduction by our pretty hostesses, and then....the disco lights, lasers, karaoke monitors, and music came on in full glory (the sound system went up to 11). The best I could do for entertainment is practice my reading to see how quickly I could read the Thai script as it rolled by. Thankfully by 12:30 am the music stopped and most everyone proceeded to sleep (except for the obligatory 4-5 more stops at the 7-11 gas stops). That wasn't so bad, I didn't know what all the uh, warnings were about.

After cleaning up in the morning (Thursday) at the rest stop and a tour of the herb farm we headed off to Koh Samet and proceeded to socialize and enjoy the wonderful air-conditioning of our rooms followed by a dinner at 6 pm. What amazed me about this trip was how organized



Load 'em up!



Official motto: All fun, all the time!

everything seemed to be for a large group of 40 even though we didn't seem to be on any particular time table: from the tour at the herb farm to all our meals being on our tables within several minutes. And it took no longer than 5 minutes for us all to check-in at the hotel. After dinner it was more karaoke at the restaurant until about 10:30pm. Then most of us went to watch the fire dancers on the beach, followed by more enjoyment of the wonderful AC.

Friday morning, with my iPods all recharged and my bags packed, we were back on the boat and returning to that beautiful double-decker purple bus. We made a couple stops to shop and eat and then by noon we were back on the road. One benefit of traveling solo in Thailand is that when you attend a concert or go to a bar with karaoke you always have the option to leave when you get a little exhausted from the experience, but not this time. After six hours of traveling, at around 6 pm at a quick “guai tiao,” stop I asked how close we were and was told another five to six hours. What????? For 12 hours I was going to be on a bus with the music cranked so loud I couldn't even hear my iPod, even when I curled my ears around the ear-buds.

At around 8 pm I thought my prayers had been answered: The hostess Nui turned off the music and put in a Thai variety show for us to all watch. You know the one. I swear my entire body went from completely tense to total relaxation mode in a matter of seconds. This was going to be great the rest of the way. Unfortunately my co-workers were in no mood to go into relaxation mode with me, and within five minutes the karaoke and laser lights were back on. For the next four and a half hours my fellow co-workers belted out song after song after song of what had to be the entire catalogue of Thai music. Yes, for 12 ½ hours from noon to midnight-thirty I was on a karaoke bus with the music cranked and with no exit strategy to be had. As I write this in the comfort of my own bed I am greatly relieved the experience is over. I still love my co-workers, but I'm not sure if I can repeat this experience ever again.



This is the party boat, right?



Kelly and his co-workers celebrate a successful trip.

Out and About:

Travel Notes: The Philippines

The Pearl of the Orient Seas

By J.P. Abon



Manila skyline

To say that the Philippines is Southeast Asia's forgotten son may sound insulting but I personally cannot think of better words to describe my country of origin. Being an archipelago, not only is it often overlooked by adventurous backpackers who would rather trek across Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, but it is also overshadowed by other archipelagos such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Due to its colonial past, much of what is considered "truly and uniquely Filipino" has been either desperately hanging on as a faint memory or worse, a casualty of the ever-changing times. Even the cuisine is understated. I have lost count of how many "Asian cookbooks" I have come across that featured gastronomies of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Lao, Malay, and Vietnamese origin but don't even mention at least one Filipino recipe. Long ago the Philippines was christened with the romanticized sobriquet "the Pearl of the Orient Seas." If the Philippines is indeed the so-called Pearl of the Orient then why the blind eye? Why the tendency to be disregarded? Why? The entire trip, I wrestled with the question of whether this pearl had truly lost its luster. Moreover, if it still did have a luster, then why couldn't I see it?

My journey started in the capital city of Manila, which I affectionately refer to as a "hot mess", a beautiful lady with a beaten up face. Like most modern cities, Manila is flashy and always on the go. Unfortunately, it is also quite polluted and neglected as evidenced by the trash on the streets and spray-paint vandalism on the side of buildings. There is also a noticeable gap between the rich and the poor. One minute you're either walking in the affluent business district of Makati or shopping at the gigantic Mall of Asia (the 3rd largest shopping in the world) and the next thing you know you're all of a sudden surrounded by shantytowns and beggars. However, if you're willing to look deep enough there are a few gems hidden beneath this urban labyrinth.

Corregidor Island is one such gem. Nicknamed "the Rock", this tadpole-shaped island located at the mouth of Manila Bay served as the country's first line of defense during the Spanish colonial years and, ironically, as the last stronghold of Filipino and American soldiers during the Japanese invasion of World War II. Today it serves as a fitting tribute to the bravery of not only the Filipino and American soldiers who fought and died trying to defend it but also to the Japanese soldiers who fought and died capturing it. Scattered throughout the island are memorials to the

fallen soldiers, war-ravaged ruins of old barracks and fortifications, bomb craters (Corregidor island endured 50 straight days of bombing during WWII), and a two hundred year old lighthouse that provided light for ships entering Manila. One of the newer attractions however is the Malinta Tunnel. The tunnel housed Filipino and American military officials (notably General Douglas MacArthur) prior to their escape and eventual exile. Today, the tunnel is home to an audio-visual presentation that recounts the last days leading up to the fall of Corregidor to the Japanese.



The Malinta Tunnel.

The walled district of Intramuros is Manila's most famous tourist landmark as well a poignant remnant of the Philippines' colonial past. Erected in the late 16th century, "the Walled City" protected the seat of the Spanish government from invasions, most notably by the British and the Dutch, as well as Chinese pirates. Resiliency is a theme that comes up when discussing Intramuros' history. During the Manila Earthquake of 1863, much of the city was destroyed, including the Manila Cathedral and the Governor-General's Palace. Though the cathedral was rebuilt, the palace wasn't and it was subsequently replaced by the Malacañang Palace, which is the official residence of the Philippine President today.

Towards the end of World War II, the entire city was bombarded during the recapture of Manila from the Japanese. Buildings that were lost during the assault included the Manila Cathedral (again, and later rebuilt... again), La Audiencia, El Palacio del Gobernador, and El Monasterio de Santa Clara. Today, Intramuros, is the only district in Manila where Spanish-era influences are still plentiful. Famous present-day landmarks include the ever-resilient Manila Cathedral, the 400 year old San Augustin Church, the reconstructed city gates, and the hauntingly somber Fort Santiago, which was witness to countless Spanish and Japanese atrocities toward political prisoners (the most famous of which was Dr. Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero). Unfortunately, due to the damage that it has accumulated over the years as well as the ineffective management and insufficient funding, Intramuros is often cited as being on the verge of irreparable loss and destruction. Yet, this classification adds to its mystique and allure. After all, aren't things more beautiful and appreciated when they are in danger of being lost forever?

If one wishes to escape the hustle and bustle of Manila, fear not for about 50 kilometers south of the capital is the province of Batangas, home of the famous Taal Volcano. The volcano sits in the



Check out these guns.

middle of the clear blue waters of Lake Taal and it presents one of the most picturesque and attractive views in the Philippines. Though quiet since 1977, the volcano has had its share of violent eruptions such as the lengthy 1754 eruption (which lasted seven months) and the destructive 1911 eruption, which completely wiped out seven nearby villages resulting in the loss of 1,600 lives. Today, Taal can be enjoyed by both adventurous travelers who are willing to climb it and visit the volcano's crater lake or by more laid back tourists who are content with simply enjoying the picture perfect beauty from the distance. On a personal note, my visit to Taal was one of my personal favorites from the trip. I was having lunch at a restaurant named Josphine's with some Thai friends. The combination of the postcard-quality view along with the consumption of Filipino delicacies such as adobo (the national dish), kare kare (a thick peanut-based beef stew), and ube ice cream (pronounced "ooh-bay" (ube is a purple yam ubiquitous in the country) made me think to myself, "Life does not suck."

Alas, my homecoming only lasted a measly 4 days. Therefore, I was not able to explore other wonders such as the Banaue Rice Terraces, Boracay Beach, Mayon Volcano, the Puerto Princesa Underground River, and the Philippine Eagle. It's always difficult to put things in a nutshell but the trip back home proved that though not as recognized as its neighboring countries in Asia, the Philippines is anything but forgotten. From the frenzy and chaos in the heart of Manila, to the heroism and valor in Corregidor, to the colonial reminiscence of Intramuros and the pristine splendor of Lake Taal, the Philippines not only invite the curious traveler but is a strong declaration to the entire world that, "I'm still here and I'm not going anywhere!"

Though some of it may have been stained over time, if you dig deep enough, you'll be surprised to find that this pearl's luster is still there.

And you know what? It will never go away.



"Life does not suck."

Because You Never Knew You Wanted Flower-Power: Let Roger Brubaker's (123) hobby become your hobby. Look for his article about plants in Thailand in the next Sticky Rice. Til then, check out this fabulous little number...



Scientific Name: *Butea monosperma*

Common Name: Flame of the Forest, Bastard Teak

Thai Name: Dtoc Tong

Issan Name: Dtoc Jan

Interesting Fact: Don't call a woman *Dtoc Tong* in Thai if you know what's good for you.

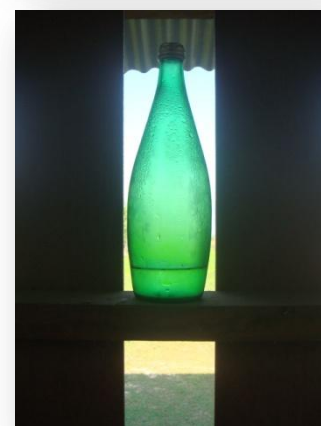
On the Job:

5 Quick Changes: Reducing Waste at Site

by Christine Duffy

Simple ideas that you can do at your Thai house to lessen your environmental impact and improve your health! Plus, you never know who might be watching and learning from you!

1. **Collect your plastic and glass, don't add it to the burn pile.** Recycling in rural Thailand, for the most part, is privatized. You can support a second income for many families.
2. **Buy a reusable bag.** Keep away from the plastic bag in the plastic bag! “*Mai sai tung!*”
3. **Reuse your spray bottle.** I've found a way to make “do it yourself” (DIY) Febreze that works great on musty, mildew smells. If you are like me and don't own measuring cups, just combine a little fabric softener, baking soda and fill the remainder of the bottle warm water. You can follow the exact recipe at www.fakeitfrugal.blogspot.com.
4. **Get Glass.** If you ever make it to Tesco, buy a Perrier bottle. Expensive initially but the bottles are Polycarbonate free (meaning BPA free) and you can reuse them in your fridge forever. My oldest bottle is 8 months old and still going strong. Plus the bottle is pretty when you scratch off the label.
5. **Think about your trash.** Even if you have trash pickup at your site, it all goes somewhere. In Thailand that usually means to the burn pile or a poorly constructed landfill. Add composting (or throwing scraps in the yard) to your routine and watch the trash pile shrink.



Beauty is as beauty does. Get some pretty glass and recycle!

ROOT (a volunteer propelled environmental group) is back! We have big plans to update the Wiki and share ALL the information we are learning about recycling and waste management in Thailand!



Around the Village...

Not only is Erica Christie's Thai nickname “Mii A'rai” (which is enough to make us giggle), but she has a cute kid living in her midst. The daughter of her host-sister asked her one day, “Mii A'rai, are their *farangs* in America?”

Peace Corps Goal 2: Check.

Project Idea: Paintbrush Diplomacy

By Rebekah Guillory

Last year, I completed the quick and easy Paintbrush Diplomacy (PD) International Art Exchange. PD is an organization based out of Berkeley, California, with a mission to “promote peace and understanding through the universal language of art” and is a great way to teach geography and language in the classroom under the guise of an art project. The project works as an artwork exchange: interested teachers throughout the world can contact PD through their website and request a pouch that contains artwork by children of varying ages from all over the world. Teachers can use the artwork in any way they wish, with the goal being that that teacher’s students will create their own art which will then be likewise dispersed around the world.



One of Rebekah’s students with his finished piece of artwork.

Prior to receiving the package from PD, Kru Ying (my co-teacher) and I coincidentally taught World and South East Asian geography which made a great lead-in to learning about the main languages, religions, flags, geography, foods, sports, and even the music of each specific country. The students and even Kru Ying really enjoyed the lessons about the different countries’ cultures, especially looking at the attached children’s photos.

When it came time for the students to create their own art, the class brainstormed ideas to share in their artwork. They included topics that focused on a typical Thai child’s village life: sports, school, religion, food, family, and homes. The students also included pictures of trees found throughout the village for the UN’s International Year of Trees theme. Kru Ying took photos of each student and attached the photo to their completed artwork.



An example of artwork, most of it including a photograph of the artist, received from PD.

If I would do it again, I would try to merge the art project with the larger World Map project or ASEAN lessons. If anyone is interested, it is free to participate but you will need to pay for the shipping costs to send the completed artwork back to PD’s headquarters. Go to

paintbrushdiplomacy.org and hover over the Programs tab and click on the Traveling Diplomat tab. Follow the directions to receive your Diplomatic Pouch filled with a teacher's guide, information about the theme based on the UN's annual theme, and a small collection of children's artwork from all around the world. If you're lucky, you will get photos of the young artist's with the artwork.



IDEA: Using the photographs and personal info that accompanies most artwork, create mini-bios about students from around the globe.



Students checking out the bio cards.

IDEA: Inflatable globes are easy to mail from the US and great for games that encourage students to learn about geography.



Proverbial Thailand:

Do not borrow another nose to breathe.

Usually the nose has an opening for breathing and smelling, if the sense of smell is in a good condition, we are in a happy manner. If our nose is not in proper condition, and you borrow another nose to breathe, you have a great deal of difficulty. The proverb is a warning that you must make an effort by yourself. Don't depend on others, it is like depending on the rope that is old and weak.



Goings On: Thai Youth Theater Takes the Stage

By Leanne Klausegger

I was sitting in our makeshift future-board "soundbooth," knees up to my chest and my laptop perched on my

knees, fiddling with the music cues as I stared up at the stage and the pint-sized actors thereupon. A missed cue here, a nervous giggle there, and lord help any volunteer who tries to get their students to speak loudly enough. But through the giggles, and the awkward silences of forgotten lines, and the constant unknowing of live theatre, it was still the best performance I have ever seen (and yes, I am entirely biased). After almost six months of rehearsals for my students, their performance at the 2012 Thai Youth Theatre Festival would be the culmination of all of their hard work. They had practiced for months, memorized lines, sewn costumes, and painted backdrops, and now it was their moment to shine like the stars that they are. And in those few short minutes on stage, I felt all the pride and tearful joy of every stage-mother who has ever watched her babies stand in the spotlight. I wondered if my students, if all the students at the TYT festival, even knew how proud of them I was -- I wondered if they were as proud of themselves as they deserved to be. If I could have hugged every student in that room that day and told them how awesome they are, I would have.

Thai Youth Theatre has been an annual event since 2003; a three-day festival in which drama clubs from all over Thailand come together to share their love of theatre and the performing arts. They first participate in group activities involving distinct theatrical skills, such as diction, improv, and the hands-down favorite of every TYT Festival, stage-fighting (Thai kids love sword fighting!). On the last day of the festival, each group performs the show that they have been working on in their respective communities. At the 2012 Festival in Phitsanulok there were schools from every region of Thailand, from south to north and then some; Chiang Mai, Phitsanulok, Kanchanaburi, Sa Kaeow, Krabi, Phattalung, Yasothon, and Amnat Chareon. Each group brought its own personal style: from fairy tales to puppet theatre, a musical of a love story gone tragic to an all-out dance-party, and each show reflected the amount of dedication the students had for preparing their show. But unlike the traditional story-telling and drama competitions here in Thailand, students participate in TYT just to enjoy theatre, have fun, and gain self-confidence. And so, because every show was so incredible, amazing, and different in their own ways, every group went home with a trophy and a sense that they were superstars. Having self-confidence is what theatre is all about: the confidence to stand up in front of one's peers, be in the spotlight, be crazy and different, and be outstanding, and that's exactly what the students at the TYT festival did.



Some of Leanne's students during their production of "Harry Potter".



My Two Cents on Thai Youth Theater...

As a certifiably un-dramatically inclined person, I agreed to go to the festival this year to try something new. What I saw unfold over the three days was nothing short of inspiring.

Overall, the weekend was a success thanks to the hard work of students, counterparts, and volunteers alike. I encourage other volunteers to consider coming to Thai Youth Theater 2013. Help organize a group of performers to bring to the festival next year, at a yet to be determined location, or just come help out on your own. Contact the TYT committee members at the following email address or see their Facebook page for additional information about next year: TYTproject@gmail.com.

Denise Silfee

World AIDS Day

By Dev Banerji

There's always that one. The one that you weren't so sure about, but it had been a while, so you downed a Vodka and Red Bull bucket and said, "What the hey," because you weren't about to compound an already bad situation and tempt the fates by cursing. In the words of Aristotle – or was it Beyonce? – Yo' mama taughtchu bettah than 'at.



The red ribbon for HIV/AIDS awareness.

And then the morning after he or she was gone. And you just lay there in a puddle of your own shame. Thinking: But that's just it, you weren't thinking. And now you were thinking: *What the heck was I thinking?!*

Yes, PCVs. The long awaited **World AIDS Day** is fast approaching. Sort of. For our purposes it got switched to February 14. That's right: V-Day. Not the one where a lot of old men parade around in military uniforms, but the one where a lot of old men are taking Viagra. Which, depending on whether you're a glass half-full or -empty kind of person, is either wildly ironic or wildly inspirational. Let's go with the second one. And so I say unto you:

~~We accept you, one of us. We accept you, one of us...~~

Oops! The above slogan was accidentally taken from the 1932 cult horror classic *Freaks*. What I meant to say was:

Happy V-Day, not VD-Day! Happy World AIDS Day, not World AFRAIDS Day!

And we, the HIV GIG, just called to say: It's negative. So we want YOU to remain positive!

What is World AIDS Day?

World AIDS Day is held on December 1 each year and is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died. World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day and the first one was held in 1988.

Why is World AIDS Day important?

More than 90,000 people are currently living with HIV in the UK and globally an estimated 33.3 million people have HIV. More than 25 million people between 1981 and 2007 have died from the virus, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history.

The theme for World AIDS Day 2011 was '*Leading with Science, Uniting for Action.*'

Today, many scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition. But despite this,

people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others from HIV, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with HIV. World AIDS Day is important as it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

**World AIDS Day this year is about "Getting to Zero."
Zero New HIV Infections. Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS-Related Deaths.**

10 goals: 2011 to 2015

- Sexual transmission of HIV reduced by half, including among young people, men who have sex with men and transmission in the context of sex work
- Vertical transmission of HIV eliminated and AIDS-related maternal deaths reduced by half
- All new HIV infections prevented among people who use drugs
- Universal access to antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV who are eligible for treatment
- TB deaths among people living with HIV reduced by half
- All people living with HIV and households affected by HIV are addressed in all national social protection strategies and have access to essential care and support
- Countries with punitive laws and practices around HIV transmission, sex work, drug use or homosexuality that block effective responses reduced by half
- HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence eliminated in half of the countries that have such restrictions
- HIV-specific needs of women and girls are addressed in at least half of all national HIV responses
- Zero tolerance for gender-based violence

WHAT PCVs CAN DO:

1. Wear a red ribbon. Thirty years after the first cases of HIV – the red ribbon is the universal symbol of awareness and support for those living with HIV. (Did You Know? The red ribbon was the first ever ribbon symbol, inspiring later versions such as the pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness.) At the very least, find some red ribbon, or even draw one on a white piece of paper and tape it on to you. Perhaps you can get your students/staff to start asking you questions!

2. Connect with a local organization and join up with activities they've already planned.

3. Research websites for more info! Really great resources:

<http://www.avert.org/>

<http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/>

<http://www.worldaidsday.org/>

<http://www.unaids.org/en/default.asp>

Volunteer Profile: *Kanji Kobayashi*

Hometown: Kaneohe, Hawaii
Site: Yasothon



Kanji gets down with some rice harvesting.

Sticky Rice: What have you been working on at your site?

Kanji: Organic agriculture and solid waste management. In Japan "Manga," animation, is the best communication media, they use for educational purposes. So I am creating slides with a lot of pictures and a few short comments about my projects in PowerPoint format. The project "Organic agriculture" has finished and submitted *hai nayoke*, and now I am working on "waste management"

SR: How are you spending your free time and weekends?

K: I teach basic English, actually playing games using English, to eight to 12-years-old kids on Saturday. Or usually I attend wedding, funeral, Buddhism ceremonies, baby showers, and house/school opening ceremonies, etc. almost every weekend. So I do not have so much of free time, besides I have laundry to take care of.

SR: Do you think knowing Japanese and English have helped you learn Thai?

K: Not really. Japanese language has only 5 vowels, a, i, u, e, o, and no tone, so people in my village still do not understand my Thai yet.

SR: Take us through a typical day for you.

K: I get up at 6:00/6:30 am Then I practice Yoga for 10 to 15 minutes, take shower, make coffee, watch TV news at 7:00-8:00 am in Thai and English, eat breakfast at 8:00-8:30 am (my host mother cooks breakfast and dinner every day). Then I go to SAO, check e-mail and work on PowerPoint for my project. Sometimes, quite often, I visit village people with SAO officers or attend luncheon / party / ceremony. Around 3:00-4:00 pm, I leave SAO and visit people in my community to see what is going on. Around 5:00-5:30 pm I go to school and do some walking / jogging in the field. At 6:00 pm, eat dinner and watch TV movie or movie video in my computer (I do not eat dinner with my host family from the first day, so I do not know why). Around 9:00 pm I go to bed.

SR: Is the Peace Corps everything you hoped it would be?

K: Everything is better/more comfortable than I hoped for. I think we are lucky to have site in Thailand.

SR: Aside from family and friends, what do you miss most about home?

K: Dog, guitar, and piano. I do not play good but it comforts me when I play, especially when I play well.

Horoscopes

Responding to life's uncertainties, certainly: Bi-monthly guidance from Laurie Hacklander.



Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)

Distractions are abundant, keeping you from your more immediate tasks. As a multi-tasker, you think, “What’s one more plate to juggle?” The problem is that it’s fine China, and your disregard for its value could hurt you. Stay focused so that the arrow hits its bull’s eye.

Pisces (February – March 20)

Pay attention to any and all random thoughts that come to you. Dismissing all of them out of hand will cause you to miss an important message or piece of information. This is the month of love, and no one is as romantic as a Pisces. Direct your expertise and creativity to your sweetheart, and don’t hold anything back. This year, romance really means something on Valentine’s Day.



Aries (March 21 – April 19)

You are in need of a gift of gentleness and relaxation and calmness. Either that or you need to be gentle with someone; take a deep breath and chill out a bit. Your heart is in the right place, but your unwillingness to budge is wearing thin. Give yourself a gift of self-care and the rest will follow.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Things heat up for you this month, my Taurus friends! You’ve got the red-hot touch, so go forward with your ideas as paths open up and you attract exactly what you want when you need it. Even in matters of love, this Valentine’s Day is a very special red-letter day for you. Enjoy it in style and paint the town red!



Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

You know that song by Dolly Parton, “Love is Like a Butterfly”? “Love is like a butterfly, as soft and gentle as a sigh, [blah, blah, blah...] I feel it when you’re with me, it happens when you kiss me. It’s precious, sweet and rare.” Don’t take this gift for granted. Know that you deserve it and accept it fully and gratefully. Happy Valentine’s Day!

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

“You took me dancing, ‘cross the floor, cheek to cheek...Just take my hand, lead me where you will. Just make love with affection.” So sings Joan Armatrading in her song “Love and Affection.” Sounds like a most delectable date, don’t you think? This date needs a dinner out, too – perhaps Middle Eastern? Fantasize away!





Leo (July 23 – August 22)

In another horoscope, I wrote about a red-hot touch. For you, brave Leo, what if everything you touched, at your discretion, turned to chocolate? Belgium dark chocolate? Not the same as the Midas touch, but definitely a close second. Although it may seem nonmalleable, what circumstance or situation do you want to alter? You can, you know. Better than the chocolate touch, you already have that power – to (re-)create whatever you want.

Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

Sweets, candy, roses, love! How idyllic! Maybe you don't really have someone to celebrate Valentine's Day with but every day could be Valentine's Day for you! You attract what you put out. On another note, stop procrastinating and watch your health.



Libra (September 23 – October 22)

Persistence is the name of the game. Maybe you need to take a whole new approach, though. Don't give up, but know when to quit, too. You would love to be heard, if only they knew what you are saying! Try another tact.

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

So much to see, so much to do, everything attracts your attention. As appealing as they are, check in as to your motivations for your decisions to go, see, do, or act. Is it really for personal edification, relaxation, fun or learning? Or is it for avoidance? Also, find your backbone and start exercising it.



Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

Your magic number is 14. Could it be for February 14, Valentine's Day? Or for the lotto ticket in the upcoming lottery? Or the number of days until some auspicious event? Doors are opening up for you and affirmations of your decisions abound. Continue to move forward with confidence in your endeavors.

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Being open to a genuine dialogue about your needs is a good way to diminish your current stress and anxiety. You can kiss your aches or sleeplessness goodbye with an honest-to-goodness frank discussion. Don't worry, it doesn't have to get deep.



Welcome Group 124 Trainees!

Advice From Those Who Have Been There, Done That

Peace Corps Thailand Group 124 is just a few weeks away from being sworn in as official Peace Corps volunteers. To welcome the newcomers, we in group 123 thought we'd welcome our new neighbors with a few words of advice for the upcoming months. *Chook dii!!!*

"Expect help from no one, specifically your counterparts, teachers, SAO staff, PC staff, your host family, your real family... but be pleasantly surprised when help from these individuals and others is genuine and heartfelt. Also, kindness can transcend culture and language, but so does drunk driving; don't get the two confuse"

–*Elliott Brannon*

"If you're asked to help with a project or ongoing task, always say yes. It demonstrates your commitment to Peace Corps goals and community integration. Luckily, the project probably won't happen. And if it does actually start, participants will quickly decide that they're much too busy and the project will go away quietly."

–*Rick McMahan*

"Remember to resign from the Results Committee and join the Efforts Committee. Not to suggest over-working. If you can enjoy and have fun with Thai people, your time will be successful. It's about relationships."

–*Linda Prinsen*

"Don't hate on those that got a great location too much, pretend you like them for the free vacation spot."

–*Kelly Peterson*

"Put yourself out in the community – be uncomfortable! The only way to be taken seriously is to not be serious. Have fun: that is the way Thailand works!"

–*Christine Duffy*

"Remember the good times. Learn from the not so good times, then let them go."

–*Heather Bryson*

"The Thai words for 'rat' and 'pork' sound frighteningly similar. Listen closely before eating."

–*Denise Silfee*

"Change is the essence of life. Be willing to surrender what you are for what you could become."

–*Tracy Wise*

"We all have a lot of experience, but none of us will have your experience. Find what works best for you."

–*Roger Brubaker*

“If you really don’t like a specific food, tell them you’re allergic. It saves you from breaking face. Never talk about someone behind their back – especially between two schools and co-teachers. Thais are much better at gossip than keeping secrets. Also, expect to be in varying levels of exhaustion for the next 24 months.”

– *Erin Cooper*

“This is a marathon, not a sprint. You will have boring, unproductive and bad days and the locals will drive you nuts. But look at it from afar and remind yourself you’re a Peace Corps volunteer: one of the coolest jobs on earth.”

– *Jeff Jackson*

- “1. If you haven’t already, leave your pride at home and laugh at yourself.
2. Oh, don’t you worry, it gets hotter.
3. An electric zapper to kill mosquitoes is an *essential* household item.”

– *Erica Christie*

“If you can’t handle spicy food, never trust a Thai (especially a Southern Thai) when they say ‘*mai pet*.’ If you put your burner stove too close to your brand-new expensive mosquito screens, a huge hole will appear negating the effectiveness of said screens. There is an art to getting water out of a well. Your new Thai friends will not tell you what it is but they will come over to watch and laugh at you as you try to make the stupid bucket fill up with water. Ladies, when using the squat toilet, ‘aim’ for the water.”

– *Pam Wharton*

“As you make your way through this journey, remember there is no shame in quitting. If ever you have a bad day, Peace Corps will pave your way home. This is not a job for everyone. You’re not a coward for turning your back on your village and your commitment; you’re just following your heart.”

– *The Patron*

“Take every knock as a boost and every stumbling block as a stepping stone. Lift up your head, hold your own and just keep going on. I say to every young volunteer, sometimes you get discouraged. Don’t stop and ring your hands, your privilege cannot be taken, your rights cannot be banned. Just keep going on; just keep going on.”

– Anonymous

“Don’t take everything so seriously. A little dancing and a lot of smiling goes a long way. And remember, just because its goal No. 1, doesn’t mean it’s the most important one.”

– *Nicolette Slagle*

“*Bpai tiaos* with Thais usually follow this breakdown: 45% wat visits, 35% eating, 20% karaoke, 0% relaxing.”

– *Ashley Dress*

“Watch out for the hiv.”

— *Gay Laroche*

Farewell, Group 122!

So Long and Thanks for all the MSG!

Parting words from Group 122

As Group 122 prepares for its official departure (we're assuming they've already mentally checked out), we here at Sticky Rice thought it would be good to give them one last word. Or several. Some have chosen to share words of wisdom, others... not so much. Still, well done 122 on making it, and good luck from here on out.

Thailand. Land of Smiles.
A magnificent place. Yes.
Thailand. Land of Awe.
-Gyann DeLuna

Hell-of-a-ride. Glad it's not over yet.
-Josh Koop

Hello Hazelden, do you have a *som tom* program?
-Anita Root

Eating my way to diabetes, one bowl of rice at a time.
-Stephen Mead

Being accepted into Thai society for two years has given me a sense of peace and contentment. I hope to bring the example of kindness back into my life in the United States.
-Loreen Todd

Thailand has taught me many things, among the most important: When life gives you limes, squeeze them onto everything you eat. It's delicious. Josh taught me that when lacking a pick-up line, the weather is always a safe bet. "*Yen sabai, ladies. Yen sabai,*" is irresistible when said with enthusiasm.
-Emily Ruskin

I am both thrilled and proud that we've all made it through this journey. I believe we all have come out of this experience with lifelong lessons and an aim to show others the Thai generosity and kindness we have all experienced.
-Kathlyn Paananen

I am so humbled and grateful to learn from Thai people. The best thing I will keep within me and that which will affect the rest of my life is the sense of community and care Thais show for their friends, loved ones, *p* and *nongs*. They put others first before themselves before work or material things. These relationships are their priority. And really, at the end of the day, aren't these relationships what make life worth living?
-Melissa Brown

I will from this day forth always be that guy who eats with a spoon, drinks beer through a straw and asks people if they have eaten rice yet.

-Joel Garipey-Saper

Farewell Thailand, I realize now that of all the places I could have been sent to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer that I am, indeed, fortunate to have found myself here. Serving in the Kingdom of Thailand has had its posh moments, but it has also been just as challenging, just as isolating, and just as unpredictable as any cross-cultural experience can be. Moreover, it has been an opportunity to experience something unlike anything I ever have or may ever experience again. Literally and figuratively, I have stumbled and fallen down—often. I have always gotten back up. Thailand irrevocably altered my values, strengthened my friendships, broadened my perspectives, and re-directed my path. And for all these things, I am humbled, honored, and appreciative. I bid you a fond farewell...for now.

-Lisa Bevell

As I close my Peace Corps service, I would like to thank my Thai friends and colleagues, my fellow volunteers and the Peace Corps Thailand staff for their friendship and support. It has been a privilege working with all of you, and I hope to meet you all again, at another time and in another way.

-Zachary Rueth

I have met some amazing people (Thai and volunteers), learned about and tried to assimilate into Thai culture (can now "*mai pen rai*" a Thai person "*mai pen rai-ing*" me), had a blast teaching the cutest 4th-6th graders, faced off against a pick-up truck and fared pretty well, and experienced extraordinary kindness, generosity, and encouragement from my community and fellow volunteers. I have so much to be thankful for and this experience has undoubtedly shaped who I am today and who I want to be.

-Maggie Carter

It's about finding yourself at the edge and taking one more step and realizing you won't fall off.

-Robina Browne

Peace Corps taught me to be patient, to accept downfalls without feeling like I have failed, and most importantly it taught me to accept that not everything is in my control. Thailand is a society and culture that we were all so lucky to live in; although, many times we were pushed to our breaking points by this culture I am forever grateful for the generosity of this country for taking us in, for teaching us lessons everyday and for allowing us to eat as much of their food as possible. Thank You Thailand.

-Zerina Borhan

I know I am in the right place when I see fireflies... thank you Thailand.

-Nicole Lemmo

My advice is to eat exactly 95% of the food that is put in front of you. This is a metaphor.

- Will Paananen

*So long,
Group 122!
The future is
bright and
so are you!*



Dear Volunteers—

From all of us here at Peace Corps, we thank you for your service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. All of you have made a lasting impact with your Thai counterparts, host families, and with the many friendships you have established during your tour.

We wish you all the very best as you begin your next journey, whether in the US or elsewhere.

With warm wishes,

David

To our departing 122s—

One of my mentors said that every morning you should get up and ask yourself two questions: What will my adventure be today and how will I made a difference? I am quite certain you have lived two years full of adventure and have made a difference in countless ways. Thanks for your service.

Wishing you all the best in wherever the adventures take you as well as the drive to continue making a difference in all that you do.

Peace, Frank

Congratulations Group 122—

I always say that RPCVs are my favorite people!!! This group is no exception. It has been an honor to work with you and get to know this outstanding group of smart, motivated people. Your commitment to volunteerism inspires us all!

I will always fondly remember the talent night and lighting lanterns on the beach in Cha-am. I will remember the varied and interesting things you did at your sites. I will remember you as the group says “no more energizers” but shares passionately in things you believe in. But mostly I will remember a group of individuals who made a difference in the world! Good luck in whatever you choose! Please keep in touch.

Paula



โชคดี

From all of the staff and training staff at Peace Corps Thailand!

