Children’s Day, planning for 2018, and outreach were the highlights of the first month of 2018

Watana Seree celebrated Children’s Day in January, with 79 students and 38 guardians joining for games, gifts, dances, talent shows and fun.

Special events like Children’s Day serve two purposes. They help build strong relationships with the community, especially with parents and with students who are new to the foundation. They also help ensure that our students, who face serious economic constraints and issues at home, feel loved and celebrated.

This month, one of our older scholarship students started volunteering to teach our younger students basic computer skills. Narong* says that he wants to use the skills he is gaining in his Electronic Engineering degree to give back to the students, like he was given a chance to study himself.

All together, the Pong Phrae Resource Center was accessed 335 this month.
This month we had four student interns from Colby University join us. Emily, Grace, Connor and Kevin assisted with a variety of things around Watanaseree. They conducted research for the Sustainable Development Program, and assisted Lucy, our International Liaison.

They also planned, developed and ran activities including Chinese Tutoring, cooking classes, and games in English. Students at the local Huay San School greatly enjoyed the outreach that they did to provide Chinese classes. They are also producing a film to help promote our internship and volunteer program!

Thank you, Emily, Grace, Connor and Kevin!

Planning for the Year Ahead

January was a great time for the team to gather and plan out the year ahead. Working together with Lucy, they helped finalize Watana Seree’s Theory of Change - the plan for how we will develop and execute programs so that we can ultimately prevent child trafficking in Chiang Rai. The team took advantage of the cool weather to head up to a nearby national park for the meeting, enjoying some team building and self-care time.
Kade, our Prevention and Awareness Manager, and Luck, our Prevention and Awareness Officer provided training to a local foundation. They trained the staff on Mandala, a type of art therapy. They also provided training on 3-3-5, a child abuse prevention program. Equipping local organizations with more skills and sharing our knowledge helps to increase our impact to prevent trafficking throughout Chiang Rai.

Luck provided a training on mental health. Discussion of mental health issues is taboo in Thailand, especially among older people. Equipping them with the knowledge of mental health helps build stronger more resilient communities and helps protect children.
Khae, our staff Counsellor, spends one Saturday a month offering services to a local children’s home.

In January she provided a training on trauma for the students. She taught them about what trauma is, where it comes from, signs and symptoms of trauma, and how to treat trauma. She asked the students to fill in a pre-test and post-test, and the results were hopeful.

17 students aged 11-21 attended the training

One 15-year-old female student reported that, “I can understand about healing inside and how it happens, this training has helped me to open my heart and I can accept many different things. In the past there were things in myself that I didn’t accept but now I can begin to accept them, and accept things in other people more as well”

Other students reported that they would use this information in their lives. Trainings like this one help students express and process their emotions. Our long-term goal is that they would use this knowledge to help strengthen their communities.
The Sustainable Development program continues to be a strong.

This month villagers assisted on the organic farm with planting morning glory and strawberries, providing additional income for our community.

Additionally, Worn, the Sustainability Director, Bu the Sustainability Officer, and the four interns from Colby, visited our weaving partners to talk about new designs.

Luck gathered 15 students, 5 of whom receive scholarships from us, to Pong Phrae one Saturday. The students, who are going into secondary school, will soon need to decide what subjects they want to study and if they want to go to high school or vocational school.

Luck asked the students to fill out a multi-page self assessment, in order to reflect on their goals and dreams. Luck, and the interns from Colby University, also shared about their own experiences. This helps our students by providing examples as for many, they will be the first in their family to go to high school.