Working on the farm, interviewing silk-worm farmers, shooting a film, and leading workshops has kept the sustainability team busy this month.

With president Rachel Goble’s visit, the team was busy at work with an American film-maker to shoot a short film about the Sustainability Program. The film will give information about the program and surrounding villages, and promote the new product line that will be launched soon. Rachel and Worn, the Sustainability Director, went to Chiang Mai this month to meet with a professor at Chaing Mai University to discuss the finishing processes of the new product line. Worn also led a workshop at the Pong Phrae Resource Center, where he taught local villagers how to make organic washing detergent. There was a large turnout of villagers that were eager to learn the process. Ending the month with a success, he also delivered the first batch of rice from the organic farming project.
Each year, the Freedom Story offers Field learning trips for people to travel with us to gain awareness and knowledge about the problem of trafficking and prostitution in Thailand. This month, we hosted two trips. One was hosted by our president Rachel Gobleand, and the other was co-hosted by Brian White, The Freedom Story's Los Angeles representative and veteran Field Learning Trip leader, and Shannon Grieser, The Freedom Story's Boston representative. Beginning in Bangkok, the trips continued to Chiang Mai and ended in Chiang Rai, where they visited The Freedom Story's Resource Centers. In addition to learning about the complex historical, social, and economic layers of human trafficking and the sex trade, participants met and learned from a few of our partner organizations as well as some of our staff and scholarship students. One of our trips ended with a trip to the Anantara Golden Triangle resort, where some of our scholarships students got to meet the attendees and participate in an elephant educational activity. The second trip included some influential members, such as One Day's Wagers founder Eugene Cho, who participated in a ceremonial flower cutting to celebrate the opening of the new resource center in Chiang Rai. Eugene's organization graciously funded the first year's programs at the new center through a matching campaign last year.
Each year, students from international schools in Bangkok and surrounding areas get together to host a ServICE fair, where local organizations are invited to set up informational booths. Part of the international school curriculum requires students to participate in community work including fundraising, awareness, and service. The fair gives organizations a chance to introduce their mission and recruit students to get involved. Three of our scholarship students joined Ketsara, Win, and Lisa to attend the fair. The first day, our scholarship students led a workshop on soap making with natural dye and an activity based on the UN Sustainable Development goal of environmental sustainability. They showed the students how to use natural materials, like butterfly pea to dye soap and allowed the students to each make a piece of soap. The following day, the scholarship students set up a booth that provided information about The Freedom Story and sold soap made from our silkworm sustainability project. The soaps were a big success and many students came by the booth to buy them. It was a great opportunity to network with teachers and schools that will potentially get involved with The Freedom Story next year to help with fundraising and awareness efforts.
This month the scholarship team went to Rajabhat University to show support to our graduating seniors. Due to the king's passing in November, the ceremony was postponed until this month. We are very proud of our five graduates, who are already working in different fields, including World Vision in Bangkok, a personal trainer, Singha Park, and running a small business in Chiang Rai. The Freedom Story will continue to support them on their journey. The Pong Phrae Resource Center continues to provide tutoring classes in Math and English and a few kids have been practicing guitar after school.

“Playing music provides an outlet for students to express themselves and an opportunity to build community while spending time with their friends and mentors.”

Children's Day in Thailand, known as “Wan Dek” was established as a holiday in 1955 and aims to help children become aware of their role in development of the country. Both resource centers enjoyed celebrations for Children’s Day. At Pong Phrae, the students and staff had a blast dressing up and competing in fun and energetic games and activities including face painting, races, and a balloon popping activity on the newly donated trampoline. There is a saying in Thailand that, “Children are the future of the nation, if the children are intelligent, the country will be prosperous.” The Freedom Story continues to provide resources that aim to provide children with the education necessary to be responsible and intelligent leaders.
Activities at Chiang Rai Resource Center

In addition to homework help and after-school activities, the students at the Chiang Rai Resource Center went to a local flower market for Children’s Day. The kids and staff had a chance to spend quality time together while enjoying the beautiful surroundings. Alaynah, our US Operations Manager visited this month and hosted a workout class for the students and staff. The staff at The Freedom Story are participating in February fitness month and the class was a good introduction to why fitness and health is an important part of our daily activities. The staff and students learned different workout activities, like planks and burpees and are looking forward to running similar classes next month.

In the community

In addition to touring the flower garden for Children’s Day, the staff at the Chiang Rai Resource Center also took a trip to Baan Patping, a local foster home near Chiang Rai. The staff gave the kids gifts, including notebooks, pens, and folders. They played games with the kids and spent time with them encouraging them to continue to work hard in their studies. Also in community outreach this month, the staff took a trip to Rajabhat University to check in on our university scholarship students. The students had the chance to sit with staff, talk about their studies, their experiences, and enjoy time together to chat and eat. As the students transition into university, it is important they are able to talk with staff to get guidance and support.