Eighteen students joined an Art Therapy session this month, led by Khae, the Freedom Story’s Advisor and Case Coordinator.

Art Therapy offers students an outlet to express their feelings and thoughts through artistic expression in a group setting of peers. The scholarship students and their peers at the Chiang Rai Resource Center were provided with various art supplies and given the opportunity to free draw something that represented themselves. After creating an image, they made a circle and shared why they chose to draw that specific image and what they were thinking about while they were making the picture. The students supported each other by listening attentively to their peers and reaching out with a hand on a friend’s arm or a hug when things became emotional.
It was great to see so many kids laughing and smiling while sharing their pictures, as well as supporting each other. Art Therapy is helping the students become more comfortable with the idea of expressing emotions. Art is something that is valued in Thai culture and a lot of the students are talented and enjoy the exercises. Also this month, Khae attended a five day Therapeutic Counseling with Abused Children training in Ampawa with Dr. Katherine Norsworthy, Ph.D. She met other professionals in the field and learned more about how abuse and trauma impact the development of children at all ages. She also learned and practiced techniques for providing counseling services for children that are vulnerable or have been through consistent trauma or abuse. With the growth and importance of the Counseling and Awareness Programs at The Freedom Story, the staff are encouraged to attend local and country-wide trainings to gain professional development and expertise.
Alongside the Counseling Program, Lux, the Awareness Director, led an emotional education activity at a Pongprae village primary school. Lux taught a group of 26 grade 4-6 students about emotional management. The goal was for them to learn about different emotions and learn how to name and share what they are feeling in different situations. Lux, with the help of a scholarship student in the informal school program, led a few fun games. During the first game of emotional charades, the students passed around a ball with different emotions written inside. When the music stopped, the student opened the ball and acted out the emotion. For the second game, Lux printed and posted pictures of six different emotions and asked the group questions, for example, “If your friends treat you badly, how do you feel?” The students ran to the picture that showed how that scenario made them feel. The third game was called Emotional Robot. One child, without talking, pretended to be a robot while the others moved his or her body into positions for the rest of the students to guess which emotion was being shown. The games were a great way to introduce and discuss different emotions and get the students thinking about their feelings and expression.
Both resource centers were full of students and activities this month. At the City Center in Chiang Rai, the students participated in cooking classes, watched movies, played games, and had English classes and activities with a local American volunteer, Daniella. Daniella volunteers every other Saturday to teach English, cooking, and other activities. This month, she did a vision board with the students who cut out magazine images to express their interests and dreams. At the Pongprae Center, one of the Light Space volunteers, Sanjoy, has been joining the students to help paint a mural. The students have spent many Saturdays designing and painting the mural on the wall of the old building. The picture is bright and colorful and allows the students to feel pride and ownership of their space. Also at the Pongprae center, the staff have been playing games, music, and cooking with the kids. One game the kids enjoyed during English class was a body part matching game. The kids had to choose a partner when the music stopped and match random body parts to their partners. For example, elbow to nose, or ear to stomach. The silly games were a fun way for the students to improve their English skills.
The kids had a special surprise this month, when NBA basketball player, Jeremy Lin, came to visit the resource centers. Jeremy was traveling through Thailand with pastor and founder of One Day’s Wages, Eugene Cho, to learn more about global issues facing children all over the world.

Jeremy sat down with the students and shared his experiences of overcoming stereotypes and working hard to chase and follow his dream of playing NBA basketball.

He encouraged the students to never give up fighting for what they want and to always work hard. During the visit, he also made time to play basketball with the kids in Pongprae, giving some coaching tips, while also posing for endless selfies and signing autographs. The staff and students were excited to host him and have the opportunity to learn more about his heart to serve, give back to communities, and learn about important global issues.

Several of the scholarship students took a road trip to the golden triangle area for an elephant walk and ride with Jeremy and Eugene’s team. The kids learned about the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, GTAEF, which promotes the ethical and humane treatment and training of domesticated elephants in Thailand. The elephants took the group on a walk, surprising the students and the team with a few sprays of water and a swim in the river along the way.
Leadership Activities and Girls Club

Ketsara, the Leadership and Prevention Director, stayed busy this month with several different activities. The Youth Partnership Program (YPP) with ECPAT had another leadership camp at the local YMCA. Also, kids from local villages came to the Pongprae Resource Center where the YPP students led games to teach about cyber bullying. They led an activity using newspaper articles to get the kids thinking about how and why bullying occurs and what they can do to prevent it. Lastly, The Freedom Story welcomed volunteer Jenna Hudlow, from Global Family, who has joined us to share a Girls Club curriculum with our leadership team and help support staff in implementing the program. During the first week of classes, the girls started to build relationships with each other through games and painting a banner for the class. The hope is that the club will empower the girls with the tools and knowledge to protect themselves and provide a safe community of support.
**Human Rights**

This month, Win, the Legal Advisor, hosted a Human Rights meeting for parents, students, scholarship students, and any interested individuals from the Pongprae community. The training included content about basic information around crime and investigation, bail, and court summons as written in Thai Constitutional Law. 32 people attended the training, including 18 parents of scholarship students. The community is happy to have legal advise and knowledge and eager to learn more from Win.

...  

**Bangkok Concert**

This month, Lisa, the International Liaison, and Nena, the Administration Officer, took one of the scholarship students to Bangkok to perform for a charity concert at The Early Learning Centre, a small international school. High School scholarship student, Ying, wore traditional Akha clothes and performed a beautiful song about the Thailand king in front of a small crowd of students, teachers and parents.

During the school day, the school handed out flyers and asked for parent donations. During the concert, additional donations were made and Lisa spoke about the mission and needs of the organization as well as provided flyers, stickers, and information about the program, including how to sponsor a student. Partnering with International Schools has been a great way to raise funds and awareness in Bangkok, as most educators also value the importance of education and its role as a prevention tool.

...
This month, Worn, the Sustainability Director, hosted several events with the Sustainability Team. He led an Indigo Dyeing Workshop for a weaving group in Samarnmit Village. The group learned the process for making and using the indigo plant as a natural dye on cotton materials. An evaluation team from the Ministry of Science and Technology also attended the workshop to evaluate the project. Eri Silk Project staff from Kasetsart University came to visit the Pongprae Resource Center and bought Eri silk cocoons from local villagers that are participating in the silk worm project at The Freedom Story. The villagers were excited to sell the cocoons and the staff were happy to see the program’s success. Also this month, Worn presented an organic fertilizer and compost workshop in Muang Luang village for both the villagers and three student interns from Chiang Rai Rajaphat University. The workshop taught the villagers and the interns how to use silkworm waste to make natural fertilizer for farming. The Sustainability team is about to launch a product line in the US called shopseri.com. We are excited to support the local communities through this product line and looking forward to the upcoming launch.