Parents and students filled the Pongprea Resource Center this month for the bi-annual parents meeting.

The required meeting is held twice a year for staff to share updates about all aspects of The Freedom Story programs, from sustainability to human rights and prevention. The team leaders shared program information and students were informed of new requirements for scholarships, including processes and procedures. The students also brought paperwork to submit, including school grades, updated addresses and personal information, and letters written to their sponsors. If the students were not able to write letters on their own, the staff had the chance to help them at the parents meeting. Updated pictures of each student and his or her family were taken by the scholarship team. The meeting also gave mentors the chance to sit with their students and families to share any relevant information about home visits, school visits, and gave them time to get to know each other better.
This month we are excited to introduce two new volunteers, Amy Parrish and Sanjoy Bose, from The Light Space. Amy and Sanjoy are teaching a professional photography class, free of charge, to several staff members from The Freedom Story and other local NGOs that are working towards the same mission, to fight human trafficking. Amy is a photographer from America and Sanjoy is an visual artist from India. After working together in Kolkata, they have joined us for the next 10 weeks.

Welcome Amy and Sanjoy

The Light Space

The Light Space is in partnership with US based photographer, Brooke Shaden, and the US based non-profit Blossomy Project, who together co-founded the project. It is a professional photography training program designed to teach photography both as a vocational training and as a tool for empowerment and self-expression.
Summer has been hot and busy at both the Pongprea and City Resource Centers. The staff have been taking advantage of the outdoor space and using the trampoline for activities, as well as the badminton net for team games. Other activities have included arts and crafts, cooking, and music lessons. The kids have enjoyed learning to play guitar and singing together at the centers. As part of their service hours, the kids have been helping to clean and take care of their community spaces.
Leadership Camp

This month, the local ECPAT staff returned to the Pongprea Resource Center, to support the leadership students in the Youth Partnership Program (YPP) to lead an anti-bullying activity. The students played ice-breaker games and then used activities to teach about online bullying when using computers and social media. The leadership students split the kids into small groups, and used newspaper articles as examples, to encourage conversations about how bullying can occur, and taught the students how they can protect themselves.

Service Trip

We were happy to welcome back a group from The International Christian School (ICS) in Hong Kong this month. Long time friend and supporter, Nate Quick, is a counselor at ICS and brought a group of 24 students to do a 3-day English Camp at several local schools. His students are 11th and 12th graders who chose to come to Thailand and participate in the justice themed service trip to learn about anti-trafficking efforts. The camp was engaging and included English and Mandarin lessons, small and large group games, and Arts and Crafts activities. The students and staff at each school openly welcomed the group and the kids were excited to meet new foreigners, play games, practice language skills, and make crafts such as origami and bead bracelets. The Hong Kong students also participated in a service project, where they worked with our staff to build an addition onto a house for two of our scholarship students. Our partnership with ICS has benefited schools in the local community and partnering with schools also gives us the opportunity to share The Freedom Story mission with young and ambitious students. Ideally they learn about the work we do and go back inspired to make a difference in their world. Our hope is that we can continue to spread the word about the important world of prevention and continue to inspire creative people to give back.
Teen Camp was a two-day program that Khae and Lux, the Counseling and Awareness team, led with the support of the entire Freedom Story staff. The purpose was to provide activities, art therapy, and education to teens in the village about emotions and healthy relationships. Khae and Lux led an Art Therapy mandala activity, where students listened to music and expressed emotions through art. The students made a list of different emotions and discussed how the emotions led them to feel and how they could respond in ways that were both healthy and not healthy. The students had many positive and engaging conversations around building positive relationships. The staff also led team building activities, like a group drawing challenge where the students had to use individual strings connected to a central pen to work together to draw a picture. Another activity challenged the kids to all stand together in a small defined space. The kids had to use communication and leadership skills to complete the tasks. The staff also led relaxation activities like massage therapy and meditation and played fun games like charades to add to the camp experience.
The Sustainability team stayed busy this month working on several projects. Three Social Work and Development interns from Chiang Rai Rajaphat University are helping the sustainability team, and as a part of the informal school program, they helped the students build a hen house and pond at the Pongprea Resource Center. The area will be used for farming chicken and fish and selling eggs. This is a great opportunity for a work project that will teach responsibility and vocational skills to the students in the informal education program.

The informal school students also attended a workshop with the team this month, run by The National Science and Technology Development Agency. The workshop was about how to use Black Soldier Flies for compost and organic fertilizer. This is something the students were excited to learn and can work together with the team to implement in their own farming area at the Pongprea Resource Center.

In other news, Win and several staff members helped build an additional room at the home of two of our scholarship students. The students have been sharing a space with their aunt since their parents passed away a few years ago. The space was not big enough for everyone, and after a generous donation from ICS Hong Kong, we were able to help them build an additional space. We also had a visit from Christine MacKay, the founder of a “travel with a purpose” organization in California called Crooked Trails. She brought a group of high school students to Thailand to learn about anti-trafficking efforts. Lastly, Tawee, the Thailand Director, took one of the scholarship students to Chiang Mai this month to sell soap and participate in a fundraising event put on by PREM International School. PREM hosted a garage sale to raise money for our programs.