



Sticky Rice

**Illustrated Thoughts on
Thailand**

Group 124's Parting Advice

*Get to Know
Sumalee*
**Friends of
Thailand
Wants You!**

*7 Projects to
Jump Start
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Holding You
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Number 27

*Everything You
Wanted To
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Petchabun*

I'm Sick of Shy!

From the Editors

As invitees in the U.S. we didn't have a clue what to expect. We packed up our two bags, we took our last trips visiting family and friends, and said our goodbyes without much certainty of what would happen next. We had our staging. We stepped onto the jetliner holding our tickets and Peace Corps passports. Up to that crucial point, all Peace Corps volunteers may have had a similar experience. After that point it has all been part of the unique experience of being part of Peace Corps Thailand.

We've dedicated this issue to the commitment to the toughest job we've ever loved, as Peace Corps Thailand-- as some volunteers have just sworn in, as some of us have moved onto our second year, and as some have completed 27 months while yet others continue their mission with Peace Corps and all around the world. (Re)Committing to service.

We invite you to take part in what makes our experience unique-- the surprise of the arrival; the every day joys, challenges, recipes, pro tips for survival, and lots of fun (because, well, Thailand); and in enjoying some of the best advice from our Group 124 volunteers as some say goodbye.

Welcome Group 126! See you later Group 124! And keep on chugging along Group 125 and extending volunteers!

Thanks for reading! And to those that have contributed in making this issue possible, thank you from the bottom of our hearts! We can't do it without you.

Christine, Nancy, and Natalia.

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Cover Photo: Wat Pa Son Gaow
by Meredith Wipf

Got something to share with the group? Send it to:

stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com

Gin Khao Ru Yang?

In an effort to help the volunteers get to know the Peace Corps staff better, the Sticky Rice editors posed five questions for the staff to answer. This edition we hear from Sumalee Hirunpanich.

Sumalee is the cashier for Peace Corps. You may find her in what the people at the office call, "The Cage," where she will be able to hand you cash directly if the need arises. Otherwise, she is the one in charge of making sure that your monthly allowances and reimbursements are distributed to you properly and on time. So staying on her good side is recommended!

Sticky Rice: Where is your hometown and can you describe what it's like?

Sumalee Hirunpanich: Nakhon Pathom province is my hometown. It is about only 56 km away from Bangkok. We have "Phra Pathom Chedi" - the largest pagoda in Thailand. The Chedi was created in Lankan style. Nakhon Pathom is also renowned for its fruit varieties and famous dishes, for example pomelo fruit, coconut, *khao lam* (sticky rice in bamboo), *khao moo daeng* (rice with red roasted pork [*moo daeng*]) or crispy pork (*moo krop*), etc..

SR: Where is your favorite place to visit in Thailand?

SH: I like Koh Ngai. It is situated between Krabi and Trang provinces. It is a very quiet and clean island - white sand and blue sea.

SR: Can you share a favorite recipe?

SH: Normally, I do not cook much but I like eating though.

SR: Tell us about the first time you interacted with a PCV.

SH: I was impressed with their Thai speaking and culture and I admire their commitment and contribution to Thai community with tireless.

Texts From Thailand

No plans tmrw. But then again that's what I said before I went to bed last night and then today happened so who knows.

Balls just seem so inconvenient for stray dogs in Thailand.

Have I told you I set my alarm a week ago as you've got a friend in me by Randy Newman and my attitude has shot up significantly since?

My coteacher showed up late, then realized he forgot his key to get into the classroom so he's been running around looking for the janitor, who maybe had an extra key. But the janitor is nowhere to be found, so he just turned to me and said, 'I need a hammer'. WTF?

So I figured it out. Thai people are drunk 90s teenagers. We're on a boat. My coworkers just spend 20 minutes taking pictures like the

titanic poster. And the booze just came out.

A: today a 5 year old boy told me I was lying about my eye color because no one has blue eyes and I made a girl cry so hard she threw up on herself. How was your day?

B: the eye color thing I can understand but you made a girl cry so hard she vomited? What? How did that even happen?

A: I walked into the room.



Photo: Sasha-Noel Udom



Fast Facts

Area: 12,668.4 km² (4,891.3 sq mi) the 9th largest in Thailand.

Population: 990,807, with 3 Peace Corps Volunteers

Number of Ampurs: 11

Rainiest Month: September, with an average of 211.9 mm (8.343 in.)

Meaning of “Petchabun”: From words based in Sanskrit, *petcha* from *vajra*, meaning “diamond” and *bun* from *purna*, meaning “perfect,” Petchabun means “perfect diamond.”

Petchabun is in the North, Isaan, Central region of Thailand. It's having a crisis. To get there, you can buy a ticket on the 1st floor at Mo Chit. To go to the *Amphur Muang*, the ticket counter is inside, the last one all the way on the right. To go to the best *amphur* (not subjective at all), Khao Koh, the ticket counter is on the 1st floor, the last counter on the right on the outside of the building.

The best *bpai tiao* I've taken was to *Wat Pa Son Gaow*. The temple is in *dtambon* Camp Son, *amphur* Khao Koh. It's tucked away in the mountains and is the most beautiful wat I've ever seen and is well worth the

journey. The wat is covered in mosaics and seriated floating Buddhas were just constructed on the hillside. Without a car, you would need to hire a *song tao* to take you up to the wat. There are no *tuk tuks*.

Other tourist attractions include Thung Salaeng Luang National Park. The park stretches over three provinces. In Petchabun there are caves to explore, rivers to traverse, and if you come during the hot or rainy season, there are leeches to battle. On the Petchabun side of the park, we have an animal rehabilitation facility. Injured animals from all over come to the facility to be rehabilitated, and

then are released into the park, giving it an interesting, yet artificial biodiversity. You can camp throughout the park or rent a cabin (basic to luxurious).

My province is famous for Brandon and Sasha. No really, it's tamarind. Sweet tamarind. There is a giant tamarind statue in the *Amphur Muang*. It's kind of phallic. Also my village, Nong Mae Na, *amphur* Khao Koh has the only species of fresh water jellyfish in Thailand. They are active during the hot season. People come from all over to check them, and the 200 species of butterflies out.

- Brandon Julian, YinD 125

Better Know a Province
Petchabun

Game

Corner

Here's a classroom game I call Snack Thief. It's for practicing the past progressive tense.

Materials: *small cards or slips of paper with actions, one for each student*

Tell the students a story to the effect that yesterday (or a specific day of the week) at a specific time, you left some snacks on your desk, you then went somewhere and when you came back X minutes later, the snacks were gone.

Explain that their job is to ask their classmates what they were doing at around that time and find the snack thieves. (You can tell them the number of thieves they're looking for or not.)

Distribute strips of paper with actions on them in gerund form, e.g. watching TV, to all students, 2-3 of the strips should have the action, "eating teacher's snack." Tell the students that when asked, they must tell the truth based on their slip of paper.

Have students mill around asking each other until someone has discovered all the thieves. If you haven't told them how many thieves there are, they can yell

out when they think they've discovered them all (ask them how many before they reveal the names in case they have not in fact found all the thieves), and you can tell them if they have or if they need to keep searching.

Variation 1: if your students can think of their own actions as opposed to reading from a prompt, you can leave the cards/slips of paper blank except for the ones that say "eating teacher's snack."

Variation 2: you can interrupt the questioning every now and then and call on a pair of students to present their exchange: "What were you doing yesterday at 11 o'clock" "I was studying English."

- Chris Luebbe, TCCS 125

Ooey-Gooey Brownies

Jill Sandiford, TCCS 125

Ingredients

Soft butter, for greasing the pan
Flour, for dusting the buttered pan
4 large eggs- from my neighbor
1 cup sugar, sifted - I don't have a sifter, if you have a strainer you can use that to manually sift with a spoon
1 cup brown sugar, sifted - not sticky palm sugar, but grainy brown sugar
8 ounces melted butter
1/4 cups cocoa, sifted- I get Cocoa from Tops, I use Hershey, but other stores have cocoa as well. Most brownie recipes use 1/8 the cocoa, but you taste the difference.
2 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 cup flour, sifted
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt- This is harder to find because I wanted sea salt. I got mine from a Tesco Extra in the aisle with imported Farang food. Oatmeal, jellies, Campbells soup, but you can get "regular" salt anywhere. SALT SNOB!

Directions

1) Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. (Who are we kidding, you don't pre-heat these convection ovens. Lift the lid, there goes the heat and the pre-heat.) Butter and flour an 8-inch square pan.- a bigger pan would be better, these are THICK BROWNIES! I got my pan at Tops. I use it all the time.
2) In a mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, (I use my blender) beat the eggs at medium speed until fluffy and light yellow. Add both sugars. (I always mix dry ingredients before adding to the wet.) After this point I use a spoon to mix and not the blender motor. Add remaining ingredients, and mix to combine.
3) Pour the batter into a greased and floured 8-inch square pan and bake for 45 minutes. Check for doneness with the tried-and-true toothpick method: a toothpick inserted into the center of the pan should come out clean. (I borrow my toothpicks from my local party of the week.) When it's done, remove to a rack to cool in the pan. Resist the temptation to cut into it until it's mostly cool. Really make sure they are done in the center or sadly, you have delicious fudge. It's a thick rich brownie. Watch out.

Better Homes and Kanomes

7 Projects to Jump Start Your Service

Christine Bedenis, TCCS 125

Projects. That's what most of us jumped into Peace Corps thinking about. "I'm going to make a difference in the world." But then, you get to site and you have no clue where to start on a project and you are pushed and pulled into only focusing on English instruction. "ASEAN is coming!" you hear. If you are standing around, scratching your head on where to start something that doesn't have teaching English as a focus, here are 7 ideas with a curriculum, all you have to do is gather up some local kids.

Global Dialogues

What is it? This is an initiative that has been around for over 15 years and is partnered with Peace Corps Washington.

How can I implement this? Every three months, they post a video that is the beginning of a story on their Web site. Then, there is a contest that is open to anyone in the world to finish the story in a way that matches with their vision of a better world. Post

that video on YouTube and at the end of the three month cycle, the videos are voted on for a cash prize.

What can I check on my VRF? Whatever the storyline relates to, Youth Development and ICT

<http://globaldialogues.org/>

Grassroots Soccer

What is it? Through a curriculum that uses soccer practices, this program educates young people about HIV/AIDS.

How can I implement this? Their Web site is a bit out of date; they will send their materials to Peace Corps volunteers in Asia. Through a series of 11 one-hour practices, participants have an increased knowledge and willingness to talk about HIV/AIDS. Send in an interest form and you'll receive a Peace Corps SKILLZ Toolkit that includes a Coach's Manual and an indestructible soccer ball.

What can I check on my VRF? HIV/AIDS

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

Codecademy

What is it? Students will build a Web site, using HTML and CSS, in one semester and an adventure game, using JavaScript, the next. This online curriculum does not require that the facilitator be familiar with programming; you can learn along with the students.

How can I implement this? Create an account and download the after-school curriculum PDF. There are step-by-step instructions to setting up a club in the PDF. You will need access to computers and students will need an e-mail address to sign up with and Internet access is required. All of the lessons are self-paced, so students can go as fast or slow as they need. Code literacy is getting a big push right now, not to mention the critical thinking skills that come from learning computer languages.

What can I check on my VRF? ICT

<http://www.codecademy.com/>

Thai Youth Theatre Project

What is it? Started by PCVs and British volunteers over 10 years ago, this project uses the performing arts as a way to promote confidence and learning English.

How can I implement this? Download the Thai Youth Theatre (TYT) Project manual from the Web site or Peace Corps Thailand Wiki. It has instructions in both Thai and English to start a group, pick a play, rehearse and perform. Once a year, the TYT Committee organizes a festival for groups to learn about performing arts skills and perform their play in front of a large audience.

What can I check on my VRF? Youth Development
www.tytproject.wordpress.com

World Map Project

What is it? This is a Peace Corps project that was started in 1988 to increase geography literacy and community.

How can I implement it? Download the World Map Project Handbook, find a place to paint a mural, gather up materials and kids and follow the directions. The handbook includes activities that use the map after it's done as well.

What can I check on my VRF? Youth Development
http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/R0088_worldmapproject.pdf

Girl Power!

What is it? A seven-week curriculum, written by a California State graduate student, for a girls' group focusing on empowering adolescent girls to think about their own identity, make healthy choices and think about their future.

How can I implement it? Download the thesis and curriculum (the lesson plans are in Appendix A), gather up a group of girls and set a weekly meeting time. Having a strong grasp of Thai, or a counterpart that can translate for you, would be beneficial. The relative short-term for this curriculum may even allow you to train graduates of the program to be peer facilitators in the future.

What can I check on my VRF? Women in Development/Gender and Development and Youth Development
<http://scholarworks.csun.edu/handle/10211.2/1184>

Engaging Boys and Men in Gender Transformation

What is it? A book of lesson plans that are geared toward boys and men to engage them in reducing gender inequalities. The curriculum takes a look at how we socialize men and boys and tackles topics such as gender and power, substance use, healthy relationships, and violence, and others.

How can I implement it? Download the Group Education Manual, reach out to boys and men in your community and set a weekly meeting time. With over 70 lessons in the manual, you should be good to go for quite some time. Again, a strong grasp of Thai, or a counterpart to translate, would be beneficial.

What can I check on my VRF? Women in Development/Gender and Development
<http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Group-Education-Manual.pdf>

Still at a loss for a project? Browse Peace Corps Digital Library's collection of Technical and Training Materials for manuals on a variety of topics, from environmental education to sustainable library development.

<http://collection.peacecorps.gov/>

Cartoons and Captions



We asked and you delivered. Here are the cartoon and caption contest submissions. Colin Johnson (TCCS, 125) illustrates some of his (our?) thoughts and feelings towards Thailand and some of you summed up what was happening in the picture.





Just another day in Thailand (Laura Elliot, 126)

My suit is bees. Your argument is invalid.

She was all like “he ain’t got no style”. And I was all like ‘BEE SUIT’

Day 45. The man has still not figured out we are bees.

Day 45. My wife has still not figured out I’m in the bees.

Bee clarinet level 200

EXCUSE ME SIR WE ARE BEES. PLEASE CONTINUE BUMPING THOSE DOPE BEATS.
(Colin Johnson, 125)



Photo: Nancy Bunyea

Jerry’s bee fetish was taking him to new heights, but having to play the clarinet to attract the bees was so damn distracting.... (Andy Munn, 125)

I'm Sick of Shy

Jeanette Clausen, TCCS 125

Probably many of you know Ntozake Shange's brilliant, Obie-winning choreopoem "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf." In one segment of the piece, the women angrily refuse their men's whiny apologies with "I'm sick of sorry!"

Not to push the analogy, but I'm sick of shy. I'm tired of hearing, from every Thai adult I talk with, and from quite a few fellow *farangs* as well, that Thai students are shy. I'm sick of it because:

First of all, shyness isn't that unusual. Many students, maybe even most high school aged students, are shy to some extent, especially when asked to speak a foreign language, and even more especially when they haven't done their homework.

Second, even if it's true that Thai students are more shy than students in other countries, what I see around me are students who display their shyness in relation to speaking English. Otherwise they can be loud, rude, undisciplined, and in most other respects the opposite of shy.

Thai teachers and other adults continually reinforce the students' alleged shyness by repeating: "The students don't understand you," or "The students are shy." In so doing, Thai adults protect students from their native speaker teachers, excuse the students' non-participation and subtly hint that it's the fault of the native speaker that students don't understand or don't listen and, most especially, don't want to speak English.

So what is my point? Obviously the situation isn't going to change any time soon, but what if we started encouraging Thai teachers and other adults to say to students something along the lines of: "Yes, you're shy, but just give it a try, reach for the sky, you won't die, and who knows, maybe you can fly!"

Maybe this is an opportunity to make a tiny bit of difference, one person at a time.

Postscript: A friend whose ear I was bending about this topic asked whether Thais mean the same thing by "shy" as we do. Honestly, I don't know, but the question prompted me to think some more about the mantra "The students are shy," and why it's repeated so often, up to a half-dozen times during the same conversation. Here are some things I thought the statement might mean:

- The students don't know what to expect from you and neither do we. How can they possibly feel at ease?
- Thai students are intelligent. They don't answer because they are shy, not because they don't know.
- We didn't like learning English when we were in school, we weren't good at English, and the English teachers weren't kind to us. We're afraid our students will have the same, or a worse, experience with you.

Maybe you have your own glosses of "The students are shy." If so, please pass them along!

"Is Anything Holding You Back?"

Spook Edwards, TCCS 126

"So, do you have anything that would keep you from fulfilling this 2 year commitment in your life right now?"

The first time I was asked this question I was a little confused. I mean, we'd all considered this as we filled out applications, were interviewed, read the details of our program and assignment and were attempting to pack our lives into 2 bags (not to exceed 80 pounds), right? I asked for clarification and the question was rephrased as, "Is anything holding you back, going to make you unable to stay for the whole 2 years?" I answered my Core Staff interviewer as best I could, saying that I'd considered this question a number of times and wouldn't have accepted my invitation in the first place if I thought I couldn't fulfill my obligations here, which is true.

The second time I heard, "Do you have anything going on in your life right now that would keep you from fulfilling a 2 year commitment to the Peace

Corps?" I was at the mid-term progress review, again from Core Staff. I started to get a little worried; Peace Corps has been in Thailand for 50+ years, they've seen every type of volunteer imaginable. Did I remind staff of previous volunteers who up and left the program when they stopped having fun? Was I participating at a lower level than other trainees? Or was I simply anxious about the review and this is just a routine question they ask everybody a few times?

"I naturally began to reflect further on how I would react when things got tough and the situation I was in felt more like a hassle than an adventure."

Well, nervous I may be, but cowardly I am not, so I approached my *ajaan* and asked why I'd heard the same question two different times, three different ways,

on two different occasions. She replied that it wasn't anything to do with me, it's simply that nowadays more and more people have been leaving their service when the picture they had of themselves serving at site didn't match up with the reality of their situation; that while there are many reasons a volunteer might end their service early, having to leave for a medical reason is very different from leaving because they decide to get married (it was at this point that I wondered aloud how long someone's marriage would last if they couldn't even sustain a 2 year commitment!).

Aside from relief that the question wasn't aimed at me personally, after this conversation I naturally began to reflect further on how I would react when things got tough and the situation I was in felt more like a hassle than an adventure.

After a while, though, I realized that just as my *ajaan* said when I approached her: it's nothing to do with me. I'm here to

serve others, to see how I can be of good use in this framework, to be another reliable partner in the relationship Peace Corps has been creating here. It's not about me, and while that can be difficult to remember at times, right now my ego just needs to take a back seat. Sure, I can have fun using the talents and skills I have to serve my community, but it's ultimately about them, not me.

As I write this we trainees still have our final progress review ahead of us, and I fully anticipate the query, "So, is there anything that would keep you from fulfilling this 2 year commitment in your life right now?" for the umpteenth time. I expect staff will continue to ask us that question, or we'll ask it of ourselves to remind us of our commitments and our deeper reasons for being here. Now I'm grateful for the repetition, the opportunity to reflect, because instead of inducing anxiety it strengthens my resolve.

Sticky Rice wants to know what could have held you back from two years of service. How did you overcome it? Is there something pulling you back now? Drop us a line with what keeps you pressing forward and we can help you spin it into a longer piece.
stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com

Thailand Pro-Tip

We got this tip in our inbox of a way to best navigate a potentially uncomfortable and embarrassing situation. While this technique has not been used yet, the author says, they will update us if it comes to it. Any intrepid readers who do try this are invited to share their experiences with us here at Sticky Rice and see if you can guess which Isaan volunteer submitted this tip.

Okay, I haven't had to do this yet but here's my plan if I forget the toilet paper and really need some.

If there is abundant and reasonably clean water, I will use my hand, then wash my hand, then go find my backpack and use hand sanitizer.

But if there's no water or it is so nasty that I can't bear to put my hand in it, I will take off my underpants and use the underpants as TP. Then when I leave the

bathroom, I will throw the underpants away in the nearest trash bin, go find my backpack and retrieve my spare underpants that are ALWAYS in there, stashed in a little plastic bag at the bottom of the backpack, and find a place to put them on.

Problem solved.

This assumes, of course, that I am wearing underpants when the problem occurs -- which most usually I always am.

If you have a pro-tip for surviving life in Thailand - something you have learned the hard way, a hilarious solution to a problem you've observed or a spin on a life lesson here - send it our way:
stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com

Number 27

Theresa Montenarello, TCCO 124

On my 26th month of service as a United States Peace Corps volunteer, I have realized how important the number 27 has been to me during the last two years. For one year, the number seemed intangible, unrealistic. I doubted I could find it in me to finish my commitments. The second year, the number 27 has been creeping up on me slowly. I have anticipated the first contact by packing, applying, unpacking, interviewing, and repacking until I was numb with emotion.

Now, with the number 27 so close I can almost touch it, I can think clearly about my last 26 months as a Peace Corps volunteer.

I became the daughter of a train conductor and businesswoman.

I attempted to introduce foreign teaching techniques in the Thai classroom with little success.

I became a "part-time Buddhist," attending temple on the appropriate days making as much merit as possible.

I obsessed over 12 of my students, pathetically trying to be their friend.

I danced by bending

my fingers awkwardly while attempting to avoid the video camera.

I ran because I was fat, in shape, determined, angry, and loving life.

I ate until my stomach was too full to fit anything else.

I became a Yoga professional by watching videos online.

My best friend and I scrambled up mountains, dived deep into the waters and stayed in the homes of strangers attempting to see "unseen Thailand."

I lied to dodge the mystery meat, or to avoid being "Thai-napped."

I have worn a rainbow of oversized polos complemented with gaudy, floral skirts.

I cried. A lot. But I also laughed until my cheeks hurt.

Now that number 27 is waiting right around the corner, my Thai friends and I can all breathe a little easier. Although I struggled, I know my Thai friends struggled as well. My friends waited patiently while I retold a story in Thai, picked me up from the bus stop at crazy hours of the night and always set an extra plate for me at lunch or dinner. They humored me while I attempted to implement community development projects, even attending fitness classes three times per week. They completed the endless amounts of Peace Corps paperwork and celebrated American holidays to help with the homesickness. My friends welcomed an odd ball into their homes, office and temple, apologizing for my clumsy American ways. My friends understood and that was all I ever needed.

My favorite month has been 27. I know my place in the community, where I am welcome and where I am not. I have made friends, something I struggled with for 12 of the 27 months. I feel comfortable here and my friends feel comfortable, too. During my 27th month in Thailand, I have received more hugs than the two years I have been here. Finally, during the 27th month, the emotions are real.

The number 27 has made it all worthwhile.

Tales from the Beyond

Friends of Thailand Board of Directors

What better way to look forward and re-commit to service than to become a member of Friends of Thailand (FoT)? Those of you who have received FoT money for your projects know our work in Thailand. We give small grants to Peace Corps Volunteers to help them with their projects. With these funds PCVs buy materials, pay for technical expertise, transportation, lodging, seed money for projects, and much more. The January 2014 issue of Sticky Rice featured photos from one of our most successful efforts, the Thai Youth Theater (TYT) program, which FoT has helped to fund for six of the past 10 years.

TYT is only one of the 89 projects FoT has funded over the past 12 years of its existence. For a description of all FoT projects, you can go to friendsofthailand.org and click on "Friends of Thailand Projects." Last year, we supported several unique projects. We helped PCV Charles Brand (124) to construct kilns that produce the organic fertilizer and insecticide called pyroligneous acid or "wood-vinegar," which farmers use to create sustainably grown plant products for export. Charlie also received FoT money to renovate a deteriorating basketball court so local boys and girls had a safe place to play.

FoT aided Kayla Hamilton, Krista Schilling, and Rissa Walters (124) to establish the first GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) camp in Thailand, which helped encourage and empower young women to become active world citizens. In 2013 also, FoT helped fund Thailand's first Youth Leadership Council, a proposal from Mimi Sodhi (125). Mimi brought young people from two isolated neighborhoods to train as leaders and work together to plan community projects.

FoT is an affiliate of National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) for alumni of Peace Corps Thailand, and was founded in 2002, by Carolyn Nickels-Cox. It was established as an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit in 2004, and is an unincorporated association in California, governed by an eight-member volunteer board. While FoT's main objective is to continue funding PCV projects, our mission

extends beyond this to the Third Goal: helping Americans understand Thai people and culture. How do we do this? We provide information about Thailand to potential PCVs and others interested in the Southeast Asia region. We work closely with the Peace Corps and NPCA to help bring the world back home through our website and other publications, meetings, and advocacy efforts.

FoT can continue its efforts and make them relevant only if we grow our membership with newly returned RPCVs. That's why we want and need you. Your experience as a PCV will inform the rest of your life, so why not continue your connection with Thailand by becoming an FoT member? As a currently serving or as an RPCV your first year's membership is free. After that, only \$15 a year for individuals (\$22.50 for families) will let you continue. Please go over to your laptop right now and click on friendsofthailand.org and become a member. You'll be glad you did.

In March we welcomed Group 126 and said "See you later!" to most of Group 124. We asked members of Group 124 to give us some parting words of wisdom as 125 hits the halfway point, 126 begins their journey and all other groups as they look forward and back and (re)commit to their service.

A life-changing journey filled with challenges, joys, learning, vulnerability, humility, laughter, and lots of rice! - Emily Ball

Thailand has taught me many things, but above all Thailand has taught me to be humble with a smile. - Nolan Ball

Two years is a long time. One year is not long at all. Any regrets I have from my time in PC Thailand come from not taking advantage of that time, from not pushing hard enough, from not taking more risks in communication and teaching and challenging my counterparts. If there are things you aren't satisfied with after your first year, do not hesitate to address them and turn those challenges into new opportunities for growth. Time goes too quickly and there's too much that you can accomplish if you push for it to be timid. - Erin Gallegos

Nothing I've ever experienced before and will never experience again, PC service has changed me forever. Fortunately, in a very good way. Live it up in the good times and allow yourself to go through the hardships. Get help if the hardships last too long, but if you can strive through, the good times are even better. - Leslie Jarvenpaa

The kids are precious and will always love and remember you! - Shellie Branco

In Thailand, the moments in between the "doing," is where real life is lived. - Susan Alotrico

"I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be." - Faith Eakin via author Douglas Adams

"When you first arrive to site a bunch of people you don't know welcome you. When you leave site a bunch of people you haven't met come to thank you along with those you have built relationships with. Those you did not meet are not concerned with your work but are grateful to you for helping the community. Those you built relationships with will have fond memories of you. I know because my villagers are nostalgic about the Volunteer that served in my community about 30 years ago. Leaving is a big party for you, but don't forget to make it about them as well." -Joel Saldana

One Last Thing