

## SCHOOL VISITS IN REVIEW

Our school visit schedule in 2018 was busy, interesting and productive. We were able to see 125 students and staff at 10 schools:

In Central Thailand

- Hansasujit Wittaya 2, Suphan Buri
- Nongjok Wittaya, Petchaburi
- Pantgru Ratrangson, Kanchanburi

In North (Chiang Mai/Chiang Rai) Thailand

- Mae Chai Wittayakhom, Phayao
- Ngam Muang Wittayakhom, Phayao
- Chiang Muan Wittayakhom, Phayao
- Janjawa Wittayakhom, Chiang Rai

In Northeast (Isaan) Thailand

- Pho Chai Chanupatham, Roi-Et
- Kokekhor Pittayakom, Mahasarakham
- Somdej Prayansangworn, Yasothan

School visits provide the Scholarship Program with the opportunity to check in with the schools to make sure they are abiding by our guidelines, disbursing funds appropriately to the girls and to keep everyone on the same page. Most importantly it provides a chance to touch base with our students and get to know them.

A small contingent of our group meets with the school director and advisors. We go over bookkeeping matters and see if there are any questions. Each school's needs are different and the level of English speaking skills varies. It is important that we understand how



*Scholarship students with AWC representatives at Mae Chai Wittayakhom School in Phayao during the school visit in June 2018.*

each school functions to make sure the needs of our students are being met. Without fail all of the schools are grateful and proud of the fact that we help their students. They understand that without our scholarships many of these girls would not be in school past M3 (9th grade).

The larger part of the group spends time with the girls, getting to know them. These bright and energetic individuals need our help and are so appreciative of the opportunity we give them. Again the level of English varies, but is usually poor to moderate level of speaking ability. Learning English is a difficult task in these rural areas as there are very few native English speakers to teach. Despite the language barrier, we have a great

time playing simple games like duck-duck-goose, Simon Says, and memory games as a way to loosen everyone up. Then we take some time to learn about the girls' home life, what they like to do, and what they aspire to be after school.

Students and their advisors enjoy taking our group on a tour of their school. This gives us the chance to see libraries, computer rooms, classrooms, special projects and the facility in general.

The majority of our girls continue on to university. We have had the privilege of meeting former AWC Scholarship students who went on to become teachers and are now back at their home schools. It is wonderful to see our program come full circle.



*Students at Pangtru Ratrangson School in Kanchanburi perform a traditional Thai dance as part of the program to welcome visitors.*



*At Ngam Muang Wittayakhom School in Phayao, we posed for this photo in the school auditorium.*

## SCHOOL VISITS IN REVIEW

### School Visit Impression

The welcoming students at Nongjok Wittaya School presented a contemporary interpretation of Thai dance. These students have been instilled with the all-important concept of giving and receiving with grace and humility. The school has the best mission statement, and like lotus flowers, they are encouraged to learn how to stand on their own in the face of adversity.

The director of this school commutes the about 40 km per day. He and the student advisor are well-loved by the students. Their respect from the girls is quite evident.

The students we interacted with seemed open, giving and willing to try new things. All of the gifts presented to the AWC group were handmade. --Mary Hathaway



Scholarship students at Somdej Prayansangworn School pose with AWC representatives during the school visit in February 2018.



*We are so proud of these girls and all they are able to overcome and accomplish!*

Small group checking out Tana's phone at Pangtru Ratrangson School. The girls love social media!



AWC volunteer with her small group of students at Nongjok Wittaya School. Everyone loves posing for pictures.



Scholarship students and their advisor at Janjawa Wittayakboon School in Chiang Rai Province with AWC Scholarship volunteers during the school visit in June 2018.

## HOME VISITS



Home visits give us a chance to see why our support is so important. Most of our girls come from humble homes. Some are only children, but most have 2-3 siblings. Sometimes we visit single-parent homes or those with no parents present. Even when parents are involved and working, the income is still lacking. Our girls come from farming families, others have parents who work in factories or create hand-made goods for OTOP (One Tamboon, One Price), a national program aimed at supporting and marketing locally made products.

These visits can be heartwarming and heartbreaking at the same time. Their homes are simple structures, often elevated, with no more than 3 or 4 rooms. Many do not have

running water or indoor plumbing. The kitchens are often at the back of the home or may be a separate area next to the house. They consist of a small burner or fire pit (sometimes we see an actual small stove)

and simple cooking utensils. Furniture is sparse. Beds are often a small sleeping pad on the floor. Lighting can be a single bulb hanging, or sometimes none at all. Electricity is expensive in Thailand so these families may not have it nor use it much if they do.

Regardless of how little the family may have, we see love and pride in the homes. These people graciously welcome us as visitors and allow us to look around and get a feel for their everyday life. They offer us food and sometimes a small gift of rice or mangos. And the love and pride for their daughter is always evident. While our girls may come from humble beginnings, their families are as passionate about their education as we are.

