

Honestly, I want to come back every year

Written by Mr. Brian Frederick Hughes (a guest from United States of America)

During my stay with School for Life, I learned one of life's lessons that we as a whole don't really bother to see because it's always so easy to take for granted. I learned what it meant to be part of a family, even when we didn't know the same words, somehow, we spoke the same language. As I pulled up on red grounds, I could see children in uniform and normal clothes all over, playing on swings, conjugating, and many very curious about who was in the back seat of the truck. But once I was out of the car, I could see what all around me better when I was escorted to room 5 by a couple of the older kids and Mr. Jo. The room was quaint and very nice. I had a desk I could work on, and a large bathroom area. I got myself settled in and I had met up with Mr. Jo and he took me around to show me the classrooms and introduce to me to the teachers. The younger students being so shy and a couple quick to say hello though. Walking down to the sports area and farming area, I was greeted by many students saying Hi, Hello!! This brought a smile to my face it told me just how much they desired to be outgoing and warm. Mr. Jo had showed me so much about the school where students learn to cook together, the water filtration systems that were donated and where step foundation and Michelin had donated a playground for the children. Also on my first day, I saw where the children took care of animals and grow their food.

After I got to see the whole area, I got well acquainted with some of the students after a delicious first night dinner was prepared for me. I had walked over to the sporting area where one of the students invited me to play soccer with them. For a group of teenagers and younger, their skills were quite surprising. They knew all kinds of tricks and at one point let me score a couple goals on purpose because, let's face it, I was nowhere near as good as them. But it was the kindness and the fun they wanted to have with me that made it so wonderful. Over the next couple of days, we had a couple adventures outside. A group of about eight children and I with a teacher went fishing. As an American who loves to fish, I expected to be fishing with rods and long handled nets.....this wasn't the

case, we used a regular throw net with chain on the outside that sinks to the bottom and you slowly pull the net to you and whatever you catch. We actually got in the water and must've walked for about a half mile to maybe even a mile or little more tossing a net and catching fish. Later that night, they were fried up and served with dinner which was made by the students too. The food was absolutely delicious.

The next day, three students, a teacher and I went on a jungle trek up a mountain and through the jungle. I remember being in my room and hearing knocks at my door excitedly, "JUNGLE TREKKING, JUNGLE TREKKING!" I learned about different kinds of stuff you can eat in the jungle. We hacked down a small palm tree and got to the heart and all enjoyed a piece of palm to eat. The kids even showed me how certain herbs you can chew up and put on your cuts (and I even watch one student do this when he cut his ankle in the river the previous day fishing. It was rather cool to watch). Eventually we made it to a fish farm with different fish like, tilapia, koi, catfish, cichlids, etc. Not far up the road from that was a zoo that had many animals from exotic birds to baboons and other kinds of monkeys, turtles and tortoises. It was a great experience to see all these animals and see the kids reactions and just watch them have a great time!

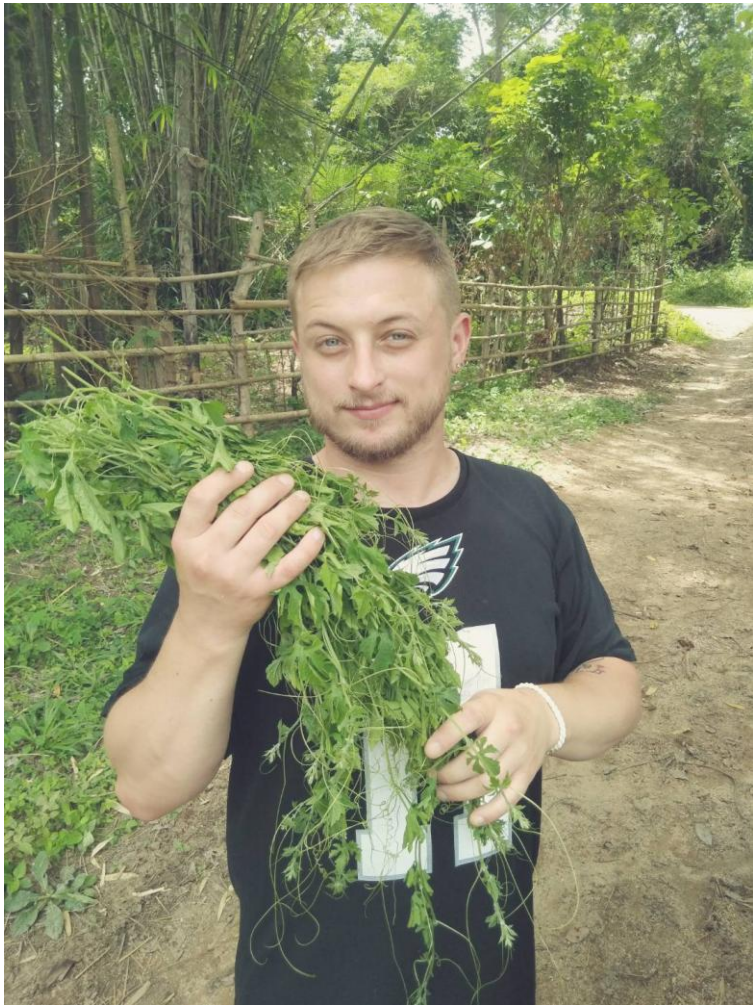
Every night, my dinners were prepared for me by the students and the aid of their teacher who taught them how to prepare the meals. Not only could you tell the students loved to do this and to cook, but you could taste it. We had Tom Ka Gai, Red Coconut Curry Chicken, and many other things together, to which, I can't even remember their names. I was always greeted with a good evening, and smiles. But the girls were very shy. When I answered back, they would laugh and I definitely would too. Every time before we ate, they always said, "enjoy your meal!" Bonding with them was so much fun and we taught each other new words in our languages.

Teaching with the students was the ultimate highlight time with them. It taught me just how eager they are to learn. I did little things with them that taught me just how each student learns differently and not the same. I noticed some students learned better by seeing words themselves while others clearly understood the speaking attributes to the English language. As a budding teacher it reminded me of the hispanic students in my hometown I teach. Some, I just teach the speaking part of English, while the others, we learn the words. The students were very eager to learn and a couple in particular I didn't get the pleasure to teach with, but had one on one time with. When I was in the young boys house, there were a few boys that loved to just be with me. They would point to things and I would tell them in English what it was, they would repeat it back. We had little mini lessons together all the nights together I was there. Their home felt so warm and like my home too. We played and laughed together. We

may not have spoken the same words but we sure did really talk and understand one another fluently.

I can't wait to come back and see how much the children here have grown. Honestly, I want to come back every year. This place of home and family is its' own living heartbeat.







School for Life Chiang Mai

185/3, Moo 4, T. Pamieng, Doi Saket, Chiang Mai 50220, Thailand.