

BARNHEM MUANG MAI

Monday, October 17 through Sunday, November 27, 2011



So much has happened both here and elsewhere. At Barnhem we've prioritized working hard with the children on their studies and homework, but when you work hard, you need to find the time for some fun as well—and we did.

Our children are back in school, we've reviewed everyone's report card one-on-one and we are now very focused on school, studies, and homework. Time flies here and we've already had some follow-up talks, during which the children tell us what they are excelling at, whether they are struggling with any subject, and so on.

Any child requiring additional support in a particular subject will obviously get it. Two of our more recent children have difficulties reading and writing Thai, so for obvious reasons we are putting great emphasis on helping them overcome these hurdles, which affect just about any other subject.

Non is experiencing what all children here go through when they change schools and go from 6th grade to 7th grade. Rather than one step up to the next level, the change represents a giant leap with some gaps. One of the holes is in English—for 6 years Non learned English without any English teacher and thus his English skills are

at the corresponding level. At the same time he has been able to take advantage of having volunteers around him, and consequently his English is better than that of many of his friends. But now he and his friends are moving on to a school that has an English teacher, who follows a study plan based on acquired skills that were imagined at an office far away from reality. It's probably the first time this young man, who loves school, has told us he's unhappy with a certain subject. But we'll be sure to see to it that this changes. And this is an area where our volunteers can really make a difference, and in fact their work has already begun. Naturally we and the kids find some time for fun as well—with some fun-filled breaks it's easier to stay focused and productive when you're studying. Hence the kids play and run around after homework, just as you'd expect.

The Happy Walk members have landed—they actually did so a while ago. They landed in Thailand on October 25 and to safeguard against getting caught in any floods, they set out on their walk the very next day—they are a tough group, our Happy Walkers.

As we're writing this, they've already covered 630 km and have “only” 270 km left to walk—by the time you read this, they've probably covered more ground.

Hans went up to see them a few days and kilometers ago. He encountered a group in good spirits and with plenty of fun stories about their walk so far. Hans also reported that besides the plus of being very fit and strong, they also benefit from large reserves of humor. Those of us who have not visited them long for the day when we get to drive up and meet them by the bridge from the mainland to Phuket.

Their objective, besides making it across the finish line, is to finish the experience with 1,000,000 Baht (approx. \$32,500) in their backpacks (not in the literal sense), so please help them reach this goal. At present they are approx. 10,000 Baht (\$3,250) short. To help them reach their goal, please visit happywalk.se.

Our Happy Walkers have walked and walked and while we've been waiting to see them, we've kept ourselves busy. The Melbourne Cup Charity Event, organized by wonderful Cristy Baker, was held on November 1, and for the second year in a row Soi Dog and Barnhem were named as recipients of the proceeds.

Both Soi Dog and Barnhem decided to re-donate the money to the flood victims, however. We are therefore currently trying to locate a children's home similar to ours. In any event it was a successful gathering with live airing of the horse races, beautiful women in beautiful hats, good food, raffle, and a terrific emcee, Garry Holden. And the raffle prizes were truly wonderful, as they had been generously donated by Pares, Andara, and Phuket Pavilion. This year's main sponsors were Andara, Strategic Airlines, Phuket Gazette, PGTV, and 92.75 FM.

Many thanks to Cristy, Garry, Jay, all sponsors, and all volunteers who helped pull off this terrific event. Now we just have to find the right recipient for our half of the proceeds, approx. 200,000 Baht.

Barnhem has welcomed new volunteers into its fold—first Lina J, who arrived on October 28. She's a lovely and happy gal, who has spent nearly a month with us and in other words she is no longer brand-new. But as you've learned by now, acquiring a new volunteer means having to let go of an old one, and this time we had to part with a true veteran, David.

David spent six months with us and during that time his name was etched into the hearts of many children and staff members alike. While it is always fun to welcome a newcomer, we must also prepare ourselves for a sad farewell. We are fortunate that David has promised us that he'll return and we are therefore keeping our fingers crossed that he'll be able to keep his promise.

Still, David was able to partake in the Halloween arrangements for the children before leaving on November 6. We celebrated Halloween on November 5 and any child who wanted to was painted and dressed up as a little monster. Once the children were all in character, they were in for a scary treat, as the volunteers had set up a ghost tour for them.

On November 4 Fame's Swedish family, the Tenerz family, came to visit. The family is sponsoring his university studies and it is wonderful to see how the bond between Fame and the Tenerz family members continues to strengthen thanks to the Tenerz's genuine commitment to Fame and his education. They first spent several hours talking and then we left with Lasse and Fame so that Fame could show Lasse the university.

Their conversation ended in the decision to let Fame attend supplemental English classes at a school outside of the university, since, as Fame explained to his family, English was so difficult at this level that his teacher barely managed to teach it. And when you're studying to become a tourist guide, languages play an essential part in your education.

On November 7 we (i.e., Sussi and Hans) left for a week's visit to Sweden, as the time had come to attend An Evening for Happy Child.

An Evening for Happy Child was held on November 10—and what a fantastic evening it was! Björn Wetterling had kindly put Wetterling Gallery at our disposal and lots of wonderful people who all share a commitment to the children quickly filled the gallery. Thanks to Kent Jansen and his Delikatessgrossisten (www.delikatessgrossisten.se), we were able to offer our dear friends tasty delicacies

and good wine, the latter from Kent's Kvalitetsvin (www.kvalitetsvin.se).

And how did we spend our evening, you might wonder. Well, we were there to give a talk on the children and daily life at Barnhem. We were assisted by Sophie, Ulla, and Anna—three of our fantastic volunteers. And to ensure that our talk flowed well, Swedish Television's Marianne Rundström from the popular *Good morning, Sweden* was also there. Serving as the evening's moderator, she made sure that our talk was well structured. We felt a bit intimidated speaking before such a big crowd, but our nerves settled down fairly quickly—our children fill our hearts with pride and joy, and somehow that carried us through. Anyway, we hope that we were able to convey some of all the fantastic wonders we get to experience on a daily basis with our wonderful children and that we were also able to express those issues that aren't always as fantastic, but which are the reasons for the construction and maintenance of our home.

But our talk was obviously not the only item on the evening's program. This year Elin (Sussi's niece) was joined by Nathalie Bergqvist and Julia Koponen (the latter of whom organized an entire concert for the benefit of Barnhem and Happy Child this past March). Together, the three fabulous young ladies did an outstanding job managing the musical entertainment.

In addition, we had been given terrific prizes for this year's raffle—including a repeat of last year's first prize in the form of a trip to Phuket for a visit to Barnhem.

Our heartfelt thanks to everyone within Happy Child, to everyone who attended An Evening for Happy Child, and to all of our wonderful sponsors—Wetterling Gallery, Kent Jansen, Delikatessgrossisten, Marianne Rundström, Julia Koponen, Nathalie Bergqvist, Elin Rosén Wetterholm, Sophie Hamrin, Anna Karlsson, Ulla Anlander, Jonas Franke, Dennis Eriksson, Emelie Benson, Dansmuseet, Fredells, Fritidsresor Sverige AB, Granit, Katti Kjellvertz, Starkat, Lasse Berghagen, Lasse Samuelsson, Lifeline, Lotta Wetterholm Friskvård, Nikon, Nils-Olof Olofsson, Kneissel Sverige AB, Pocketshop, Ringside Event, Scalateatern.

Together you made it an unforgettable evening and in addition this unforgettable evening generated approx. SEK 42,000 (\$6,000) for our wonderful children.

One unfortunate thing about spending this time period in Sweden was that we missed little Bat's second birthday on November 9. But he was certainly celebrated by everyone who was home and we are sure to be there for his third birthday—so it was still worth it.

The same evening that An Evening for Happy Child was held in Sweden, Loi Krathong was celebrated here in Thailand. Hence the preceding days were spent making little banana rafts—krathongs, which on November 10 were sent off from Sarasin Bridge filled with wishes and greetings. A beautiful tradition loved by the

Thai as well as by Westerners fortunate to experience it.

Now we must briefly return to Sweden. This time we wish to tell you about all the staff members at City-kliniken, www.city-kliniken.se, in Gothenburg who showed up on Saturday, November 12 to work at no charge all day for the benefit of Barnhem and Happy Child.

All proceeds from the day were donated to the children. The idea came from Thomas Gjörling, who, together with his family, always tries to find ways of supporting us. How fortunate we are to be surrounded by so many fantastic people!

And now a quick jump back to Thailand and another addition to our group of volunteers. Upon Lina's arrival we were faced with a pleasant problem...two Linas! But we solved it by simply calling them Lina Nung (Lina One) and Lina Song (Lina Two). And now it's happened again—on Sunday, November 20 we welcomed to Jessicas...phew. They haven't been here that long, but I suspect that we'll resort to using Nung and Song again.

And yes, we welcome some and bid farewell to others. Thus today we had to say farewell to fantastic Jennifer (who's spent five months with us) and lovely Lina Nung (who's spent four months with us). No fun at all—but we must be grateful for all the months they've spent here and hope that they decide to come back.

Now it's time for us to say goodbye and to get started on this day that will bring us lots of games and fun, since Chris from the British School will be bringing many of his students over for various games and competitions. We'll tell you all about it in our next letter.

Warm regards,

Sussi and Hans



Grandma Ma, mommy Porn, and ghostie Bom.



Barnhem's oldest child-Mr. Tazien, 91 years old.



Barnhem's youngest child-Bat, two years old.



David works hard and Bat helps out.



Fame flanked by his two Farang fathers, daddy Hans and daddy Lasse.



Our little monsters are all set for the ghost hunt.



An evening for Happy Child in Sweden. Here, Kent Jansen who kindly treated us to the delicious food.



Elin and Julia provided wonderful music...



....together with Nathan.



Elsa was the evening's pro at selling raffle tickets.



On the very same day in a totally different part of the world, our children were making their krat-hongs.



Opar and Best on their way to Sarasin Bridge to "loi" their krat-hongs on Loi Krathong.



Deeply immersed in homework.



Our wonderful Wow manages to help with homework while serving as a bed at the same time.



Some more homework.



Jennifer and Lina during their last day at Barnhem. We will miss you!