

BARNHEM MUANG MAI

Sunday, July 6 through Monday, September 29, 2014



Now it's been far too long since our last letter and we can only blame that a month disappeared in Sweden and that after a month in Sweden we are a little bit behind with most things here at the orphanage ... but let's be honest, the absence of a letter from us is mostly because we want to spend extra time with the kids after a month away. But now we are ready.

Our last letter was written by the amazing Emil and Lina, two of our returning volunteers. Shortly after their letter, it was time for them to say goodbye and Hans went to Sweden the same day as Emil, on July 7.

Sussi stayed for another two weeks, two weeks of preparing our absence with Wow. Sussi also got the chance to welcome Ellinor July 18, before it was time to leave for Sweden on July 21. Ellinor made herself at home while we were in Sweden and she has done it brilliantly thanks to Linn, Pauline, Mie, our staff and the kids.

Sweden was as always absolutely fantastic - we met family and friends most of the time but also had time meeting with the board of Barnhem Thai-Swedish Foundation and Happy Child. Sussi also visited the TV4 Morning Show to talk about, and talk with Happy Tour, when they were in Iran.

During our time in Sweden it was “business as usual” at the orphanage, just as it should. We are not directly indispensable because we have the world's best Wow, the

best staff in the world and our amazing volunteers in place.

Hans was back again August 8 and Sussi August 21, and it was as if we had never been away at all.

Hans started work with welcoming our first German volunteer, Thomas, who arrived in Phuket the same day as Hans came back. Thomas, who has proven to be a great asset to the Barnhem, is massive and has that quiet self-confidence that often comes with big people. And he is very kind - can it get any better!

The first thing that happened Sussi when she came back was that little Ploy came up to her and told her that she did not want to go out walking because she was tired... Okay, Barnhem's grandmother gave Sussi a big warm welcome home hug, and you can actually not get a better welcome than a child who comes up and tries to dodge a walk - it is really welcome home at it's best.

We have now been home for over a month, a month filled with normal lovely day to day life as well as a touch of drama.

We have had meetings with Barrie and John - two great Englishmen who have decided that they want to help us to rebuild Barnhem. Yes you heard it right!

Barnhem was built in kind of a rush after the tsunami and has been in use for almost ten years - and 10 years filled with life and noise and lovely children has taken its toll.

John who is in construction made an inspection of the orphanage and it was after this inspection it was concluded that it would be both cheaper and better to rebuild the entire site from scratch instead of renovating - something we could never pull off on our own. But these two gentlemen are willing to try, and have also brought with them two Thai women in the group - Khun Kira whose family is from Phuket and Khun Kwan who is an architect. The idea is to go out to construction companies and hotels on the island and ask everyone for a little help instead of turning to just one company as it would be way too heavy and costly for one individual company. The idea is to ask construction companies for materials and other companies for help with money for labour.

By now, we already have new drawings that we are waiting to get approved and the group has started contacting companies on the island. We have already received our first donation from a local Pullman hotel.

We informed the board of Barnhem Thai-Swedish Foundation and Happy Child about the project when we were in Sweden and Happy Child has decided that the proceeds of this year's "An Evening for Happy Child" will go to refurbishment project. It felt really good to be able to report this to Barrie and John in our meeting.

And while we are at it we just want to tell you that this year's "An Evening for Happy Child" will be held on Friday, November 7. We will soon send out more information about the evening to you all. This evening will be a bit special since it is ten years since

the tsunami and therefore we will go to Sweden to attend, so we hope we get to meet so many of you as possible.

As it is almost ten years since the tsunami, we have had a lot of visits from media, September 14 Amanda Blue who is making a documentary for Australian television visited us at Barnhem to include us in her documentary and now Folke Rydén is here to shoot parts of his follow-up documentary to the documentary he made in direct connection with the tsunami.

The same day that Amanda was here for her documentary, we received reinforcement with another volunteer from Germany, Martin, so now we have two huge and very kind men at Barnhem.

Although it is low season we got to experience a happy reunion when Nelly, a former volunteer, came to visit us. She was in Phuket for a week and spent most of the week at Barnhem. All you wonderful volunteers, you have no idea how much this means to the children!

And what about the drama that was promised – okey it might not be that much drama but last weekend we had to go to hospital with Wia who had very painful stomach-ache. It turned to be appendicitis, and lucky enough she had surgery immediately the same day. Today is one week since surgery - she came home after two days and the scar has almost healed already so now we'll just try to keep her away from climbing too much in the trees.

Drama number two happened yesterday - Dta fell on a stone when we were at the beach so it was another Sunday visit to the hospital and Dta had to have a few stiches on his right leg. But he is also already feeling much better.

If we feel that we need more drama, we don't need to look any further than outside our gate as we have a Chinese temple next door and Phuket is now celebrating the Vegetarian Festival, *Gin Je*, and all Chinese temple have Maa Songs that let themselves be possessed by Chinese spirits which make them pierce their cheeks, slash themselves with axes, walk on glass and hot coals and so on - and this happens right in the middle of our little street.

Ordinary people can, if they want to, spend the next few days dressing in white, eating only vegetarian food and abstain from alcohol, drugs and evil thoughts - which feels much easier and less painful. Our kids of course find all this really exciting and some of our staff and some children have chosen to dress in white and eat vegetarian. For some of our children school holidays have already started and for the rest of the children it will start next week. They will be off from school until the end of October so during the holidays we will try to do a lot of fun things. For example, we are invited to go to a wakeboard park, which everyone will enjoy!

Last but not least, we want to tell you that we this evening will skype with Calle,

Fredrik, Tomi and Christoffer - Happy Tour - and perhaps even with their new companion Lee that they have met in China and who has decided to join them all the way to Barnhem.

Isn't it just amazing - they are already in China! And if we thought that one or two of them would give up on the way, which would have been perfectly natural, we were wrong as they instead have become five.

Soon it is time for those of you that have bet money per kilometre to pay up and those of you that have not yet done it - to do so if you dare - they are truly worth one last encouragement.

Today it is six months since they started, during these months they have made it through 15 countries, now they are in China and after China, they only have Laos and Thailand left before they come to us. What an amazing feat! We are both proud and grateful.

See you hopefully on November 7

Sussi and Hans



Our gorgeous kids.



Our oldest and most hard working boy - he is aiming to become an architect.



Opar and Bat.



Jack is making a pose.



Wow and her assistant Bai-Tuy.



Time for homework.



Little Miss Bow.



Bonut is visiting us....don't miss the guy in the back.



Relaxing after homework.



Via is a great poser...



Erik who is working with Folke quickly became very popular.



The mandatory sleeping and cuddling picture.