

# BARNHEM MUANG MAI

*Thursday, January 22 through Sunday, April 12, 2015*



*The schools are closed for break and it's very quiet here at Barnhem. Some of our children have gone home to their villages and seven of our boys have chosen to spend break living as monks at Wat Manik. But before the break and the quiet, lots of things happened. Most things were fun; other things were less fun, but still okay in the end.*

Time flies, as you're surely all aware, and yet we are always surprised when we realize how long it's been since you last heard from us. But we'll rectify that long silence by bringing you an update and our latest news.

As we write this, our children are enjoying the longest school break of the academic year. Hence, we've spent much of our time on homework and exams since our last newsletter, and it has all paid off. Most of the children brought home very good grades – yet again!

At Linn Talmoen Myhr's initiative, some of Ving's staff members organized a wonderful day for the children here at Barnhem on Sunday, February 1. They even arrived with lots of gifts that had been donated by their guests during the high season.

At first, all of the kids had their faces beautifully painted by the gang from Ving – they all looked great, and it was obvious that the artists had decorated many children's faces before. The kids enjoyed getting painted, but they probably had even more fun when they, in turn, got to paint the staff members. As usual, things didn't quite end

according to the initial plan, and the paint strayed from faces to other areas, with mixed results. No matter, everyone had a great time.

Next, the kids got to learn some dances and songs. They started out on a shy note, but soon enough they couldn't hold back – the group burst out singing and dancing with great gusto on our lawn. Many thanks to everyone at Ving for a fantastic day!

We have welcomed new volunteers and bid farewell to a few.

On February 15 we welcomed Jane, who had come to replace Moa, who then left on February 22. On March 8 we welcomed Kajsa, who had come to replace Sassa, who then left on March 15. And last but not least, on March 19 the time had come to say goodbye to Sabina.

We lost three very good volunteers, but we were lucky to find reinforcements in our two new and wonderful assets.

On February 18 we at Barnhem had to wave goodbye to our beloved boys Dee and Lan. Two terrific little gentlemen who have given so much of themselves to all of us at Barnhem.

They were moving back in with their mother, who has gotten a fresh new start. Hence it was really a joyous day, but even so, we watched with some trepidation and aching hearts as our children walked through the gate, hoping they wouldn't need to return.

Those moments are full of conflicting emotions – everyone is happy for the boys, but not as happy for himself/herself. We all tried to hold back our tears, with the exception of Grandma, whose age has earned her the right to expose her feelings. Once the boys had departed, many took off to the privacy of their rooms to care for their own feelings.

Naturally, we do stay in contact with the boys and their mother, and everything seems to be going well.

We've enjoyed many fun visits and dear reunions since we last wrote to you. Unfortunately we cannot mention each and every one of you by name, but we want you all to know how very grateful we are that you take the time to visit us – your visits are precious.

It was quite special that Julia Koponen came and finally had the chance to meet the children for whom she has worked so hard. It was Julia who in 2011 and 2012 organized two sold-out charity concerts – Music for Life – for the benefit of Barnhem.

It was also a lot of fun for the kids to have their beloved volunteers, Yvonne and Jenny, return for a visit.

As you can tell from this letter, most of the past several weeks have been spent on daily routines tied to homework and exams. But on the weekends we've also made time for

various excursions, swimming, and long walks.

As this school year was drawing to a close, seven of our boys decided that they wanted to spend the break as monks at a temple. And that desire is something that we all support.

On March 29, a big ceremony was held for our little monks at Wat Manik, the temple where our boys now live as monks. It was a lovely and dignified ceremony for about 100 boys and their proud parents, who got to watch their sweet little boys transform into monks when their hair was ceremoniously shaved off, and they were handed their orange garments.

Before Calle had to return home (for now), he was able to attend the ceremony during one of his last days with us. We were pleased that he did, and that Annika from Happy Child was also able to attend this very Thai ceremony.

With only seven children at home, it's very quiet, a bit boring, and also rather cozy.

Our fantastic volunteers have spent their time on digging through our inventory of clothes, putting aside the items we need, and donating the rest to those in need beyond our walls, incl. camps for construction workers.

Tomorrow we will celebrate Song-kran, the Thai New Year. We will kick off the day with a traditional celebration at the temple with our seven little monks, and in the afternoon we'll take off for Nai Yang Beach and the less traditional, but oh-so-fun water fight.

We'll have more details in our next letter.

*Warmest regards,*

Sussi and Hans



*A group photo with the staff at Ving and everything that they brought along for us.*



*Team gets a pretty face on top of her already pretty face.*



*Little pieces of artwork in progress.*



*Nid doesn't recognize her beloved boys.*



*Our Cool Gang.*



*Wonderful Linn, who organized this day of fun, is seen here with Bai-Tuy and Bow.*



*This is Dee, our beloved little tiger, who has moved back home to be with his mother...*



*And this is Lan, equally beloved and equally charming. The two brothers left behind a big vacuum.*



*And the face painting ended with Barnhem giving back to Ving's staff members - the resulting faces were not quite as pretty.*



*Bat looks down at the big girls, who're waiting and therefore spending their time killing time.*



*Hans, Andaman, Calle, and Annika are also waiting.*



*Sweetest Grandma of ours, here with Hans and Andaman.*



*Nun at the start of the shaving process...*



*And at the near end of it, a happy Owen!*



*With his hair gone, his eyes became all the more pronounced.*



*It's rare to see Pett this calm and serious.*