

# BARNHEM MUANG MAI

*Tuesday, September 8 through Sunday, October 25, 2015*



*About a month has passed since our last newsletter, and it's been a month filled with fun events that we want to share with you. And our new home is already taking shape.*

The time had finally come in early September when the complete renovation of Barnhem finally begun. And it's happening so quickly – hardly two months have passed and the new building is already taking shape, making it possible for us to envision the shape transformed into a house before too long.

So, yes, we're sort of living on a construction site right now, but the active area of construction has been cordoned off to keep the children away. We're also in a country where people are very used to adjusting to any new condition, and hence no one seems affected by the fact that the play areas have shrunk in size. On the other hand, who wouldn't want to adjust when you're getting something fantastic in return? We will never be able to sufficiently thank everyone who's been involved in this project to convey our deep appreciation – words or gestures would simply fall short.

While our new home is in progress, we plug along with our daily routines. In early September our children were still attending school, including little Bai-Tuy, who now attends preschool at the Gecko School. Students at the Gecko School are taught to care for the environment, and September 11 was dedicated to cleaning up the Nai-Yang beach, which we did together with Bai-Tuy and all other children and parents. There was a lot to clean up, but when you do it together it becomes fun, and the day

ended with everyone having lunch together.

On the same day that we spent cleaning up the beach, Barnhem welcomed Maria, whose arrival reset the number of volunteers to four again. And now that a month or so has passed, it feels as if we have always had Maria in our midst.

September was a month of focusing on school, homework, and final exams. And since our students are very diligent and conscientious, they all deserved the break that started late in September for our older kids and in early October for our younger ones.

Coincidentally, we have some bragging to do – as we're writing this, we only have the results for how our older kids have done at school, and we should mention that five of our seven kids who attend the Muang Thalang school enrolled this past May for their first semester. The school covers both middle school and high school.

And here we go – each and every one has done incredibly well, so well in fact that we're almost embarrassed. Non, who is in her second year of high school, and Nun, who is in her second year of middle school, are both practically straight-A students and ranked no. 1 of their respective classes. And of the five who were new to the school, most managed to not only maintain last year's beautiful grades, but also to bring them up a notch. We celebrated a bit in advance by letting them go with Wow to Phuket Town for lunch and a movie.

We're confident that we'll get to brag some more once we've received our younger kids' grades.

Our older kids went on break at the end of September and the others joined them in early October.

During the gap of having the older kids on break and the younger ones at school, Boy and Nid brought the older ones on some volunteer activities. They paid a visit to the elderly at a nursing home; they helped with cleaning at a temple; and they helped with cleaning up the Nai Yang beach. We share the belief that it's at least as rewarding and fun to give as it is to receive.

Agneta arrived on October 4 to replace Vilda. Hence, we had to bid farewell to Vilda on October 10, but she's still in Asia and we therefore happily said *au revoir* instead, looking forward to seeing her soon again.

The same day that brought us Agneta also brought us Barnhem's very own Calle. This time he came only for a week's visit, but a week is better than nothing. The week included many visits to Barnhem. Calle had brought along a friend, Martin, which led to a lot of soccer. Martin was also introduced to the art of Takrot.

Someone who has made quite an impression on our Thai colleagues and kids in terms of Takrot is Hanna, and we must make it clear that our Thai friends are not easily

impressed when it comes to Takrot in the hands of Westerners.

Takrot is like volleyball, but you play with your feet, head, and a very hard ball – so, yes, she’s a tough cookie, our Hanna. Perhaps she has that from her fabulous mother, Susanne, whose charming personality has made it into the hearts of our children, teenagers, and colleagues.

Agneta is an artist and her creative soul is making its mark on Barnhem. It started when she and Wow made arrangements for the kids to go to Art Village in Rawai to see Khruu Bom, a Thai artist who is environmentally conscious. Two trips were made. On the first day, the older kids went and got to try making bags out of old plastic bags and plastic bottles, which was quite a success. For the second round, the younger kids got to make pretty pinwheels, which sound like the wind when you wind them up.

A day or two later the kids got a chance to paint like Jackson Pollock. The results were fantastic – true works of art. In fact, even the T-shirts they wore while painting eventually turned into works of art.

And nowadays someone is always painting – the kids love it!

About a week ago everyone at Barnhem was invited to HeadStart, an international school here on Phuket, for a day of activities. The school had had a fundraiser during the weeks leading up to the event and had collected clothing, food, goods, and money. They had also had a bake sale for our benefit.

And what a wonderful day they gave us! When we arrived at 10:00 am, we were first given a tour of the school, and then we got to see the play room. The play room is where the school has a ball pit, which was a hit with kids of all ages. After some fun in the play room, the kids got to choose between soccer and painting. Those who picked soccer, got to play on a real, large soccer field and had their very own coaches, i.e. older students who had volunteered for the task. Those who picked painting were asked to draw their hand and then fill the hand with thoughts and feelings. This activity was also led by older students. The time spent on soccer or painting was followed by basketball on a wonderful indoor court and swimming in HeadStart’s fabulous pool. These activities were also led by both adult trainers and students. Even if some stomachs were growling by lunch time, we had to tear the kids away from playing and swimming. But once they were seated in the dining hall, everyone enjoyed the delicious food prepared by the students’ parents. After lunch, the day concluded with the kids making their own soaps, which they got to bring back to Barnhem.

We probably don’t have to tell you that when we rounded up the group of at 3 pm for our ride back, they were all very grateful, happy, and content.

We feel fortunate to have had such a fantastic day in the company of such fantastic people.

Today we just returned from restaurant Peony at Nai Yang, which invited everyone at Barnhem for a wonderful lunch. After lunch, we went swimming for a long, long time. We were joined on this excursion by Annika, from Happy Child, and her daughter, Nelly, who are visiting us. And since Sophie, Henrik, Keilon, and little Silas are on Phuket now, they joined us at Nai Yang as well. They have more or less spent every day at Barnhem since arriving on Phuket, which we and our kids greatly appreciate. We truly are a great, big family!

When we came home, nine-year-old Nelly took the initiative to teach anyone who was interested how to make bracelets out of rubber bands. And there were quite a few who wanted to learn and had fun doing so, including our teenage girls. Now we're hoping that Nelly will come back as a volunteer when she's older.

We're spoiled and immensely grateful!

We want to convey our thanks to all the wonderful people who are close by on Phuket or elsewhere in the world.

*Warm hugs,*

Sussi and Hans



*Our nearly completed, new house.*



*Spending time with Khruu Bom at Art Village.*



*One of Barnhem's many Jackson Pollock wannabes.*



*And one of the beautiful paintings.*



*Going full steam in the ball pit at HeadStart.*



*Soccer training at HeadStart.*



*More art; this time at HeadStart.*



*Everyone had fun playing basketball, including Eak, Sussi, and Maria.*



*Water fun in HeadStart's pool.*



*Soap production.*



*Two very happy guys with the soaps they made all by themselves.*



*An expectant group at Peony's.*



*Awaiting the delicious food that Penny served us.*



*These kind souls invited everyone at Barnhem to Peony's.*



*Lunch was followed by swimming!*



*Nelly teaches the kids how to turn rubber bands into bracelets.*