

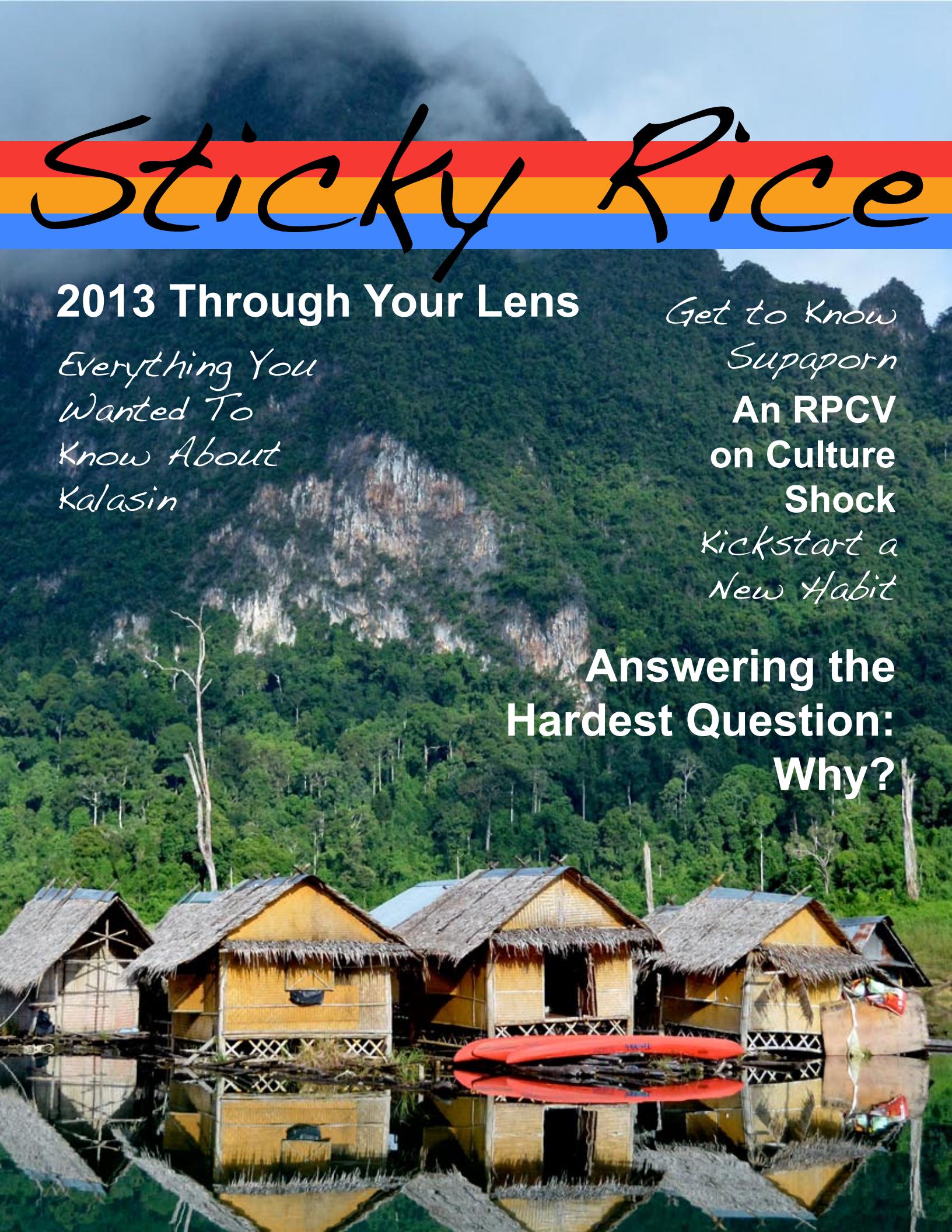
Sticky Rice

2013 Through Your Lens

Everything You
Wanted To
Know About
Kalasin

Get to Know
Supaporn
An RPCV
on Culture
Shock
Kickstart a
New Habit

Answering the
Hardest Question:
Why?



From the Editors

A fresh start. A new bright-eyed and bushy-tailed group of trainees arrives in Thailand. Bags packed up with all the worries and excitements of starting fresh in a different country, community, family; feeling as if their life is a brand new spiral-bound notebook on the first day of school.

New beginnings. A no-worse-for-wear group of volunteers prepares to move on from the Land of Smiles. Well, most of them anyway, we're keeping a few for ourselves for another year. Bags packed with the memories and experiences 27 months will leave you with ready to begin anew somewhere else in the world; feeling as if they pressed the pause button, but really need to go back to the beginning.

And yet another group of volunteers begins a new role as the wise sensai to the young grasshoppers. Jai yen yen. Mai mii jai ron. Jing law? Jing jing.

This edition of Sticky Rice is jam packed. Some of your fellow volunteers took the time to reflect on a fresh start or new beginning in their life. We've also had the pleasure of looking at many beautiful photos, and the pain of having to choose winners, for the Photo Contest.

There's a whole lot packed in these pages. Thank you all who submitted; we couldn't have done it without you. And keep an eye on your inboxes, we'll be preparing the next issue soon!

Best,
Christine, Nancy and Natalia

In This Issue

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In which we ask a staff member 5 pressing questions

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Because slap game and quick draw get old fast

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Tales from the Beyond

A Thailand RPCV looks back on their time here

Poetry

Cover Photo: Karissa Warner

TYT Photo Essay

*Got something to share with the group?
Send it to:*

stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com

Gin Khao Ru Yang?

In an effort to help the volunteers get to know the Peace Corps staff better, the Sticky Rice editors posed five questions for the staff to answer. This edition we hear from Supaporn Boonrakasatya.

Supaporn is Peace Corps Thailand's Training Manager. You will remember her from heading up Pre-Service Training and texting her your whereabouts then.



Supaporn during PST 125, Karen Andrews

I just had a language win I never thought I'd have. I talked on the phone-a feat in its own right- to my yaai in suphan and we had a real conversation. Like probably more words than I ever spoke to her before.

They can't be too expensive. maybe invest with real money?

We dominate the dance floors with make believe ropes and basketballs

Sticky Rice: Where is your hometown and can you describe what it's like?

Supaporn Boonrakasatya: I was born in Bangkok, and just four years ago I moved to Nonthaburi. Nonthaburi is the provincial capital of Nonthaburi, Thailand. It is situated near the mouth of the Chao Phraya River and faces the Gulf of Thailand. Nonthaburi is the 2nd largest city in Thailand. Recently, the National Physical Plan 2005 identified Nonthaburi as one of the future growth centres and a hub for trade, commerce, transportation and tourism. Nonthaburi is also considered as the social, economic and commercial hub for Central Region due to its strategic location. Rapid development since early 21st cen-

tury has transformed and modernized Nonthaburi. Since 2005, Nonthaburi has had many development projects across the city

SR: Where is your favorite place to visit in Thailand?

SB: Mae Hong Sorn

SR: Can you share a favorite recipe?

SB: So sorry! I can't cook but I love to eat all kinds of food.

SR: Tell us about the first time you interacted with a PCV.

SB: I was so excited to be selected to work as an Language Integration Facilitator in my first Pre-Service Training group with Peace Corps, and that was group 73...long time ago.

SR: What's the most people you've seen on one motorcycle?

SB: Two women, one little boy and one little girl!

Texts from Thailand

I get bored and do things, I dunno.

this bus ride feels like it will never end

I would do some disgusting things for pizza right now.

everything makes sense now
(5 minutes later)
that didn't last very long

I just found a rather sizable bug

crawling around in my buttcrack.
How?

Yeah the person in charge of making my two year plan for my goal of working with the Environment brought me a piece of paper with REDUCE-REUSE-RECYCLE printed on it. But hey at least it was in english right?

Just got a 5 min explanation of john lennons music in thai



Photo: Carly Collins

Fast Facts

Area: 6,946.7 km² (2,682.1 sq mi) the 29th largest in Thailand.

Population: 981,655, with 1 Peace Corps Volunteer

Number of Ampurs: 18

Rainiest Month: September, with an average of 221 mm (8.7 in.)

Provincial Slogan: *Fa Daet Song Yang Ancient City, Pong Lang Folk Music, Phu Thai Culture, Phrae Wa Silk, Pha Saweoi Phu Phan, Lam Pao River, and Million-year Dinosaurs.*

To get to Kalasin from Bangkok, depart from Mo Chit bus station. Buy your ticket on the 3rd floor.

The best *bpai tiao* I've gone on was to the Sirindhorn Museum. It's a huge dinosaur fossil museum that's pretty cool, and it's part of the reason Kalasin is known for dinosaurs. Near the museum is the largest dinosaur fossil research facility in Southeast Asia. You can see a partially excavated fossil in one of the facil-

ity's buildings.

I wouldn't recommend going to *Lam Pao Dam*, unless you're really into grey concrete and a less than picturesque view of the surrounding flat landscape.

Other tourist attractions include *Jurassic Park!* On the way to the Sirindhorn Museum, stop on the side of the highway and visit this randomly placed "park" of life-sized dinosaur statues. Super awesome for photo shoots!



Kalasin is famous for, well, dinosaurs. Khon Kaen pretends to be famous for dinosaurs, but it doesn't have anything on Kalasin. We're also famous for the long-pang, an upright wooden xylophone-looking instrument. There's a music festival in March that's really popular and features several long-pang performances. I will be competing this year.

- Carly Collins, TCCS 125

Better Know a Province
Kalasin

Game Corner

Tired of using boring tally grids to mark how many points each time has? Tired of the uncertainty when it comes to ending the game? (At what point do you stop, right?)

This technique is for everyone! At the beginning of the year, I gave each student a sticker that had a shape, color and number on it. (For example, an orange star with the number 2 inside it.) They put these stickers on their name tags so that they could remember their shape, color and number. We played a game practicing breaking into “color groups” “number groups” and “shape groups.” Now any time we have an activity with small groups, we just have to say one of these three groups and the students can do it quickly and easily. It’s also been a great informal way to help students learn and practice the English words for colors, shapes and numbers.

Back to the game board. Any time we play a game involving teams, we use this board. You can see that the game pieces have a specific color, number and



Photo: Laura Jones

shape on them to indicate which team it represents (This way, regardless of how we have broken up the groups, their team can be represented easily.) It would also be fine to just use numbers on the game pieces and have the students count off to break into groups. We use this board with phonics games (slap game, letter scramble game, encoding, etc.) speaking/listening games, anything that you would use tallies for, you can use these game boards for to make it more interactive.

Before allowing any student to move his or her team’s game piece, I ask “What team?” and he or she must answer with his or her team’s number, color or shape. For the monkey board, the first team who’s monkey reaches the bananas wins. For the car board, the first team to read the finish line wins. It also marks when the game has come to an end. We always have the winning team stand up and take a bow, then have everyone clap. (It goes along with one of our Genki English songs.) For some reason, the game boards can make any game more engaging. The students (even matayom) beg to use them every day. You can also be creative with it and make it look however you want.

Chewy Flour Tortillas

Joel Garceau III,
TCCS 125

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
3/4 cup lukewarm milk or soy milk

Directions:

Mix ingredients in a bowl. Let sit for 15 minutes covered. Flour (like, get crazy with the flour!) a surface and roll out using a well floured rolling pin (empty beer bottles work wonderfully! Bonus: you have to empty it first!).

Cook in a hot dry skillet (no oil) until it begins to tan and fill with air bubbles and then flip over it should (this should only take, like, 30 seconds per side but go slow and flip a few times the first time you make these to get the hang).

Better Homes and Kanomes

Homemade Sriracha Sauce

Jessie Larson, TCCS 125

1/2 - 1 kilo of peppers (depending on the size of your blender and your desire for heat)

1-2 heads of garlic (depending on your tolerance for garlic breath)

1/2 c. of vinegar

1 1/2 c. of water

1 c. of sugar (to taste but normally the Thais like it on the sweeter side)

6 tablespoons of salt (to taste, but it really can balance out the flavor)

Directions:

Blend the larger red chilies, garlic, vinegar, and water (if you want it super spicy you can add a red bird chili or two as well but only fresh, don't use dried)

Strain the spicy redness so that none of the seeds or skins are in, but some of the pulp remains (you need the pulp to get the thickness of the Sriracha we love)

Bring to a simmer and, incorporating salt and sugar to taste.

Store in the fridge for up to a month or separate and store a bit in the freezer to last longer between making more.

Granola Bars

Michael Sieng, Ying 125

1 c. loosely packed brown sugar
1/4-1/2 c. butter or 1/4-1/2 c. margarine, softened
1/8 c. natural cane sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and lightly grease or spray 9 x 13 pan.
2. In large bowl, beat brown sugar, sugar, and butter until light and fluffy.
3. Blend in honey, vanilla and egg.
4. In separate bowl, combine flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt.
5. Add flour mixture gradually to sugar mixture and beat until combined.
6. By hand, stir in almonds, chocolate chips, Rice Krispies, and oats until well mixed.
7. Press mixture firmly in bottom of greased pan, and bake at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes, or until light golden brown.
8. Cool and cut into squares.

1 large egg
1 c. all-purpose flour
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 tsp salt

1 1/4 c. Rice Krispies
1 c. semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 1/2 c. rolled oats
1 c. chopped almonds (optional)
raisins (optional)

Kai Luk Kuey (Son-in-Law Eggs)

Jessie Larson, TCCS 125

Ingredients:

6 hard boiled eggs (or as many as you have)
1-1 1/2 c vegetable oil
3-4 shallots (thinly sliced)
5-10 dried red peppers (depending on your heat tolerance)
1 T soy sauce
1 T sugar
1 t salt
1/4 c crushed peanuts
1 c tamarind juice

Here's how the magic happens:

1. Fry sliced shallots in hot oil until golden brown. Carefully remove from oil and drain.
2. Use same oil to fry hard boiled eggs until golden brown on all sides (Stand back and use a long spoon to turn as they like to crackle and pop!) Carefully remove from oil and let cool to the touch.
3. Use same oil to flash fry red peppers until they darken slightly and remove to cool with shallots.
4. Immerse 2 inches of fresh tamarind into 1 cup of water and knead until the water is browned and seeds are removed.
5. In a wok or cleaned skillet heat the tamarind water with sugar, salt, and soy sauce to taste (we're aiming for a sweet and sour type flavor) and reduce until slightly syrupy, then add peanuts and remove from heat.
6. Slice the eggs in half lengthwise and lay on a platter, yolks facing upward. Sprinkle with fried peppers and shallots, then drizzle with tamarind sauce.

What If They Wonder

Jim Friel, TCCS 126

The young people in Thailand may wonder if I can understand how they feel!
Watch me speak your language - sleep on your earth - and feel your hurts.
By my actions they will know!

Flour Tortillas

Michael Sieng, YinD 125

3 c. flour
3/4 tsp salt
2 tsp baking powder
1 c. warm water

1. Stir together flour, baking powder and salt.
2. Gradually stir in enough warm water to form a crumbly dough; then work dough with your hands until it holds together
3. Turn out onto a board and knead until smooth.
4. Divide into 10 to 12 pieces and shape each into a smooth ball.
5. Cover lightly with plastic film and let rest about 15 minutes.
6. For each tortilla, flatten one ball into a 4 or 5-inch patty, then roll into a 9-inch round, rolling from center to edges. Turn tortilla often, stretching dough as you carefully peel it off board. Make sure these are paper thin
7. As each tortilla is shaped, place on preheated, dry, heavy griddle or heavy wide frying pan over medium-high heat. Almost immediately, tiny blisters should appear. Turn tortilla and immediately start pressing a wide spatula directly on top of it-- press gently but firmly all over the top.
8. Serve tortillas as soon as they are soft; or cool, remove from bag, wrap in foil, and refrigerate or freeze.

Getting Back To It

Sasha-Noel Udom, Yin 125

After *bpit* term, I had been feeling very sluggish. I had no energy, constantly wanted to sleep and when it was time to sleep, I could not. It was a horrible cycle. I knew there was something going on, but I did not have the energy to investigate. Daily, I would get home and think to myself, "What did you do? Why are you tired?" After several conversations with others, I decided to write my daily schedule prior to *bpit* term to see what had changed, in hopes of understanding what is happening. I noticed that since *bpit* term, my routine had gotten all out of wack. My normal schedule was not packed-full with tons of exciting activities, but it was also certainly not me sitting at the SAO all day. I realized that since *bpit* term, I had been sitting at that desk and it was draining me, slowly but surely.

I came up with a plan; I could not deal any longer. I decided to take up any offer to go anywhere and do anything. I know you are thinking, "WHAT SASHA!?" but believe me, if you had to choose between being Thai-napped or sitting at that evil, soul-draining desk, you would go, too. Plus, some really great stories come out of those Thai-nappings, so, let's say I'm doing this for all of you, as well. I have said "no" to being Thai-napped about 3 to 4 times since that plan and those were definitely the slowest days of my life.

The rest of my plan included other things to kick-start my energy. First, I needed to get myself up and moving, doing whatever, whenever. Next, I needed to get off the soda, *chaa yen* and Oishi and on to water. I've been pretty successful, only having a *chaa yen* here and there. Once I felt satisfied with my progress on drinking less sugary drinks, I moved to my next phase: exercise. Aside from going to work, the market, or a school, I had been neglecting my bike and my usual work out.

Reestablishing an exercise regimen has proven to be the hardest part of my plan. I have increased my work-outs, although I have yet to get them as steady as they once were. However with the help of some fellow volunteers, I have been getting a workout in, during some part

in my day.

The final part of my plan is creating some form of me time. Not me-and-my-bed time or me-and-my-computer time. Just plain ol' me time. I set aside the time so that I can write about my feelings, my day, or a funny story; sing (apologies to the animai, but its "me" time); dance (I may not a dancer but its fun to pretend); read about the latest DSM updates or find online journals to keep my professional skills on point (I haven't been reading since I lived in Supan); or arts and crafts.

Now, I'm back to teaching English and life skills (more English than life skills, but I'll take it), moving and shaking. I'm still *lenning* Facebook lots (thanks for the "lols" and "lmbos"), but I'm drinking more water, working out and utilizing all those self care tools I learned in PST. And the result is - a reenergized Sasha-Noel! I am sure I may have another slump here and there, but for now, I'll take it one day at a time and when it crops up, I'll know just what I need to do; will I do it is a other topic, LMBO.

Why Peace Corps?

Faith Eakin, TCCO 124

I started hearing this question long before I left America. It followed me to Thailand and I have this sneaking suspicion that it will return with me- a souvenir I'll carry for years. The question would be asked and I would respond with an awkward shrug, tilt of the head and an introductory "well" that lasted far too long.

I would speak of service and of giving back, of learning and of adventure. The same themes were listed every time but never anything clear and concise.

Twenty something months later and my whole world has changed. The answer to why I joined the Peace Corps lives and breathes in the moments no one back home will ever see. This week I meditated on a sturdy, wooden floor in a Temple built nearly 200 years ago. I walked to a friend's house to sit around and eat sticky rice dipped in spicy pepper paste in the presence of their dying grandfather. I was called over to sit near the man who hasn't eaten in 20 days, whose skin has sunken into his thin bones; the way water sinks into mud during a storm. I rode to a house I'd never been to before, to watch and learn how to weave Thai mats out of sedge plants. I peddled to the field where

one month ago, I planted rice. I stood with Pa John and felt pride swelling inside because where there once was nothing, now tall rice swayed in the wind, because of a few days full of hard work among people who have spent their entire lives immersed in the land. I think about those moments and the reasons I wanted to join Peace Corps sharpens and blurs simultaneously and I accept that I'll never be able to give a brief, textbook answer.

"I discovered what really matters, and it has nothing to do with big projects and nice photo ops..."

I am currently sitting in a minivan with twelve of my matayom students. They are singing songs loud enough for the car next to us to hear each word. The giant, flat screen TV displays the text that they are giving a voice to. Our first stop is at a 7-11 lit by fluorescent light bulbs and filled with junk, dressed up in colorful plastic wrap to trick us into thinking its legitimate nourishment. The people here are beginning to choose artificial creations with a 3-year shelf life over the fruit and vegetables they grow

abundantly on their land. They are following our lead and it's like watching a movie I already know the ending to but there's nothing I can do but let it play out and wait for the credits to roll.

Then, that's life right? Waking up each day and choosing to put one foot in front of the other, never truly knowing where you might end up. It has become clear to me here that it's not the outcome I'm seeking; it's the moments in between, the moments that fill me up and make me a better person. In three months, I will leave this country, the home, and people who have changed me forever. I think back to when I got on that plane to Thailand and I realize that I really no idea what I was getting myself into.

One day, over three years ago, I woke up and applied for a two-year adventure, simply titled "The Peace Corps." I joined to give my time and share my skills with people I had never met, not fully understanding all that they would give to me. I found myself living in a location I once read about in National Geographic when I was younger. I cultivated friendships that broke through cultural and language barriers. I missed home and later redefined what home re-

ally means to me. I was introduced to loneliness and for a short time isolation became my friend. I quickly came to love the people who accepted me with no questions and just as I was. I felt myself break a little in the place where love and trust reside when one of those people died. I was given time and I realized how profound it is. I questioned the concept of words, of success, of belief, of family and friendships, of truth and lies. I wrote and read more than ever before. I woke up every day with the goal of making my decision worth it. I now cringe every time someone offhandedly asks me "So are you ready to come back and get a real job?" The idea of seeking satisfaction from the number on a paycheck or defining success by what socioeconomic box I fit in seems more artificial to me than the shrink-wrapped snacks at 7.

I discovered what really matters, and it has nothing to do with big projects and nice photo ops, it's about the small moments that are hidden inside daily interactions with other people. I didn't master the Thai language but I'll al-

ways value the attempt to learn it. I was introduced to a new culture and realized that aspects of it have always been a part of me. I found how comforting is it to belong. I now speak in rhymes, a consequence of teaching English for two years in another country yet I see with clarity and recognize that the last 600 plus days were a chance for me to learn, from people similar to me, who just wanted to give.

And somehow I've found myself here, riding through the night, with teenagers who speak another language. A dialogue spoken in a foreign tongue that tells the familiar story of youth everywhere. I see in them all the aspirations I had at their age. I validate their fears of what will happen after graduation as I hear myself telling them about my family, about how I was the first to graduate from a four-year university. I shake off their disbelief that someone from America could possibly come from a place so similar to them. I tell them about hard work and how my parents believed in me, so in turn, I believe in them. Later, I watch them face the ocean, some of them for the first time and what's reflected in their eyes startles me. I see in them a mixture of fear and excitement as they take in something they really cannot possibly understand yet.

I laugh out loud thinking that this is how myself and all the other trainees in my group must have looked that first week in Thailand, over 23 months ago, when we arrived having no idea that our lives were about to change. We had no idea the challenges we would face, or how much we would come to love the people and appreciate the culture, which upon arrival appeared so very removed from us.

Nearly two years after arriving, I finally understand why I am here. I breathe in deeply and close my eyes. My heart beats along with the music pounding through the speakers and my body sways along with the movement of the minivan going way too fast and I know what it means to be happy and alive in the Land of Smiles. I know exactly I joined the Peace Corps and for once I wish someone was there right then to ask me why because I finally have an answer to give.

My Service in 6 Words

"good, better, best, bad, worse, worst"

"Normal is a big range."

"Change happens faster than I thought."

"Eat more rice! Why you fat?"

"I failed every day; resolute prevailed."

"Northeast go-getter. Learned to let go."

"I sought beyond smiles for understanding."

"Bai sai ja?" "gin dai mai?"

"Change takes time. Thailand takes longer."

"I'm fine thank you and you?"

"Here, I learned how to love."

"For Peace, I will eat bugs."

"The ultimate challenge, a priceless gift"

"Patience is stronger than words."

"Discover your own definition of success."

"Doing nothing is doing a lot."

For more search Twitter #Servicein6Words

Why 27 Months?

Jay Padzensky, TCCS 125

I reflect on Peace Corps service a lot, really in a critical way- Am I making the impact I thought I would be? Am I gaining the skills for which I was hoping? Am I growing personally? Asking these questions makes me understand why service is 27 months. Peace Corps stresses, hard, integration and collaboration with the volunteer's counterparts and community, and for good reason. Imagine taking a foreigner into your job for the purpose of skills transfer. Even if you request their presence, there still needs to be groundwork laid for a solid relationship- trust, respect, compassion- before any progress can be made. The best recipe for that is time and always putting your best foot forward, with the best intentions in mind.

My first semester at school was, by and large, pretty uneventful. I taught some classes, laughed with some kids, began a relationship with my co-teacher Aoy, director, school community at large, and did basic skills training with Aoy. I didn't have any other projects,

but a volunteer can make a pretty solid argument that getting accustomed to your site, building new relationships with market vendors, curious community members, local government, health, education workers, and learning how to be ok with flipping your entire life upside-down is, indeed, a project itself.

"I embrace my community. I love it. It's a part of me and I'm a part of it."

In reality, that's more or less what I did. I made my face shown. I spoke with vendors and various key institutions in town- the municipality, many schools, the health center, locals exercising at the stadium, and others who were into running and cycling. I've played with my neighbors' children. I talk with curious individuals in whichever language they feel comfortable. I run and bike with people who I now consider friends. I integrate.

I see community inte-

gration, now, as something much different from even just 11 short months ago. I didn't do these things in America. I didn't take the time to talk to my vegetable vendor about them and their family, or the education system, or the importance of a local food system. I didn't go out of my way to find others who are interested in the same things I am because I already had that social support in friends. I didn't get to know things that were important to my neighborhood or town by talking to neighbors or local government officials because I didn't view it as important. These are all things I've done and learned by simply taking the time to open my mind and inquire about my community so that I may be better at serving it.

Having done this, I embrace my community. I love it. It's a part of me and I'm a part of it. It is home for now. Additionally, I've undertaken additional roles at my school. I now teach English to teachers at my school who want to learn and practice more. I have an English

club for grades one through three that rotates classes through to expose them to foreign individuals and English from a native tongue. I have begun working with my school and municipality on a Youth Tour Guide program to simultaneously improve youth confidence and English abilities and hopefully increase tourist foot traffic through town (and directly increase incomes of those who would otherwise participate in a tourism sector should it be more pronounced).

By putting in the time to participate in festivals, customs and ceremonies during the first semester, I've been rewarded, if you will, with more responsibility through improved relationships. People know me, can trust me, want me around. A month into this second (of four) semesters, I have better relationships with teachers and students, because they will seek me out for conversations and/or playing. I get discounts on (and free!) food from vendors and neighbors. This exchange definitely prompts in me the feeling of "the more you do, the more you want to do." As my community embraces me more, I want to do anything and everything I can to improve the quality of their lives. Ultimately, it is considerable time well spent that will permit you an opportunity to do so.

Ah! Thailand

Barbara Harm, TCCO 124

The Land of Smiles?
Well, yes, but to me, Thailand is a land of many other things that I will remember, too.

To me, Thailand is the Land of

fantastical daytime rainstorms, violent, booming, flashing, exhilarating. With water that hurls down, smashing into the ground arrow straight from the sky.

quiet, gentle night rains of languid lullaby.

voracious vines and grasses, growing inches in a day, covering even the worst human-made scars in short order.

enormous tree leaves, dropping in the cold season like paragliders.

the corn bird song.

butterflies and dragonflies inside the house.

lovely, silent night skies filled with stars.

the largest insects and spiders ever.

the smallest insects and spiders ever.

the most bizarre insects and spiders ever.

blue crabs scuttling across the lawn.

great variety of greenery: dazzling displays of shape, size, color, even in a small space.

compost piles in which food scraps deteriorate almost magically.

backhoes and tractors.

raised roads through rice fields.

water overflowing the Ah, Thailand. Thank you.

road and Thai people camped out on either side of the overflow, partying and net fishing.

brooms that clean vast amounts of rubbish over vast amounts of space in teeny tiny bits of time.

no air vehicle traffic at all.

papaya and banana, mango, coconut and tamarind growing right outside the door.

chickens running free.

cows grazing in the schoolyard and along the roads.

lizards.

lizards.

lizards.

bare feet.

Three-Year Transformation

Joel Garceau III, TCCS 125

You wouldn't recognize me three years ago. Today, I'm nothing like that fresh faced 21-year-old, just graduated, working off a three week long island binge at staging in DC. Three years ago when I first traveled to China with the Peace Corps I was quiet, shy, and immensely self conscious. No longer.

To put it frankly, I didn't like who I was back then. In addition to not being very outgoing, I was out of shape and way too dependent on other people for self confirmation. Also I would never ever think of talking let alone singing in front of large groups of people. Well Peace Corps forces you to look at yourself with clear eyes outside of the comforts of home. Looking back three years ago I have difficulty recognizing myself.

I used to be quite the unhealthy eater, I would drink too much, not exercise enough, and never speak my mind for fear of offending someone. Now a days I live a much healthier life, I cook almost all my food myself, I exercise instead of eat when I get bored, I'm true to myself and who I am, although I still (occasionally) drink too much. I have no issue at all with getting up and acting silly in front of a ton of people, giving speeches, or even singing to thousands of my Chinese students.

One of the major reasons I decided to serve a second Peace Corps tour was that I liked myself so much better after two years in China. I felt that I was

a better person in almost every way. I felt that I had grown and improved, and I wanted to continue to grow and improve.

Here I am in Thailand and, indeed, I have continued to grow and improve as a person. Most of you know just how different things are for me now, how much happier I am; how much truer to myself and others I am. I don't think I would have ever been able to be true to myself without my Peace Corps services and my fellow volunteers.

I'm doing things now that I used to not think possible. I've competed in my first half-mara-

thon and I'm biking and running distances that I never could before. I'm outgoing and self confident enough to dance and sing along to my music pretty much everywhere in front of pretty much anyone (cough cough PST). I have no problem with being the weirdo I am (see every interaction you've had with me) and I no longer need other people for self confirmation.

I'm infinitely happier than I was before I started this journey and I'm eternally grateful for this opportunity to work with such amazing people and to grow and mature as a person.

Loy Kratong

Chris Lubbe, TCCS 125

new constellations rise over the night treetops
shifting and converging on destiny's horizon
the winds of change, at first resisted, now lift
lanterns aloft
fate's fireflies, yielding softly aglow
with kindled dreams of transformation
and hope

while on the waters, lapping, or gurgling, swirling and rushing
crowns and wreathes, elaborate or simple,
mirror the lights above,
transporting messages,
washing away sins, regrets,
and misdemeanors

three realms meet at fingertips
which lightly grasp and release,
grasp and release
repeated down the shore, around the curve
of sand and water
vanishing into the distance

2013 Photo Contest

The theme of this edition of Sticky Rice is Fresh Starts, New Beginnings, which inherently implies the end of something. Conveniently, it was the end of the year; so we asked you to take a look through the photos taken over the previous 365 days in Thailand and submit what images you thought best represented the categories of "People," "Places," "Things" and "Holidays." All of the submissions are published below, along with the winners of each section and a Best Overall. Our gratitude goes to everyone who submitted and congratulations to the winners.

Best Overall Winner - Karissa Warner





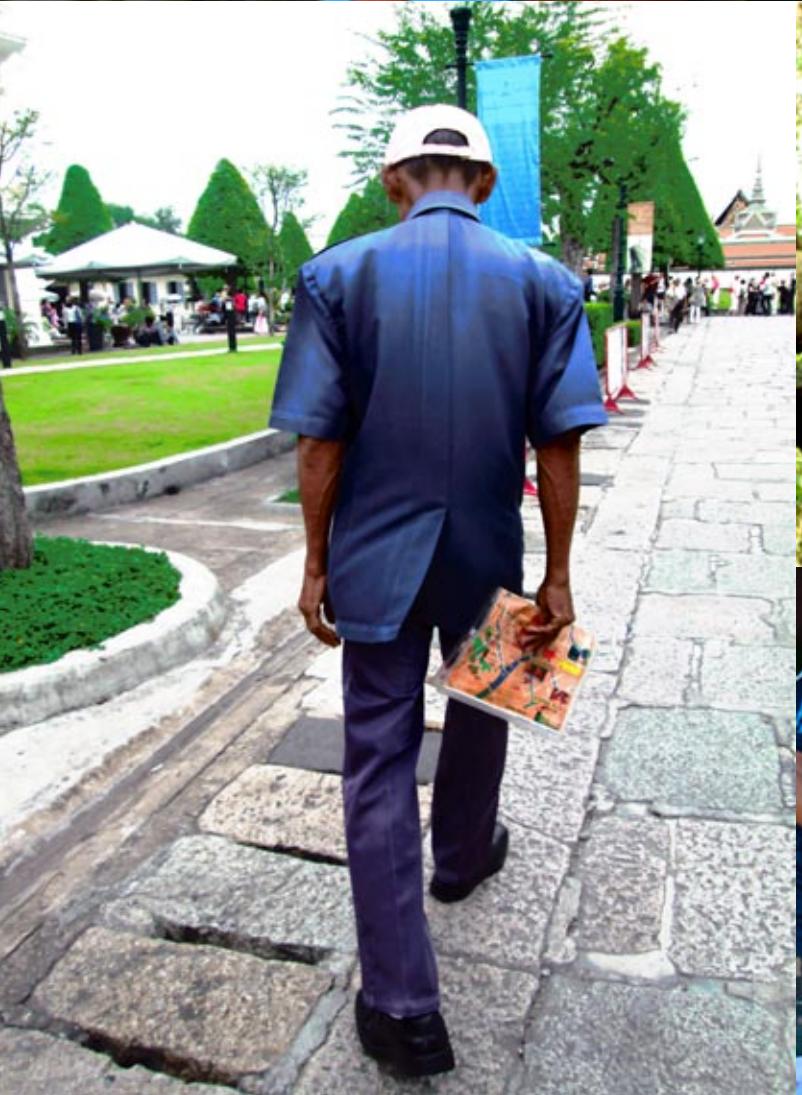
Top: Winner - Krista Schilling; Bottom Left: Chris Luebbe; Bottom Right: Laura Jones

People



Clockwise from top left: Michael Hamby "Kid"; Nick Paddock, Julia Schulkers "Nepali Elders"; Karissa Warner, Faith Eakin; Rosie O'Connor, "Heart"

Clockwise from right: Jessie Larson, "Anuban Sweetheart"; Theresa Montenarello; Karissa Warner; Michael Hamby, "Stroll"; Michael Hamby, "Kung Fu Dangerous"

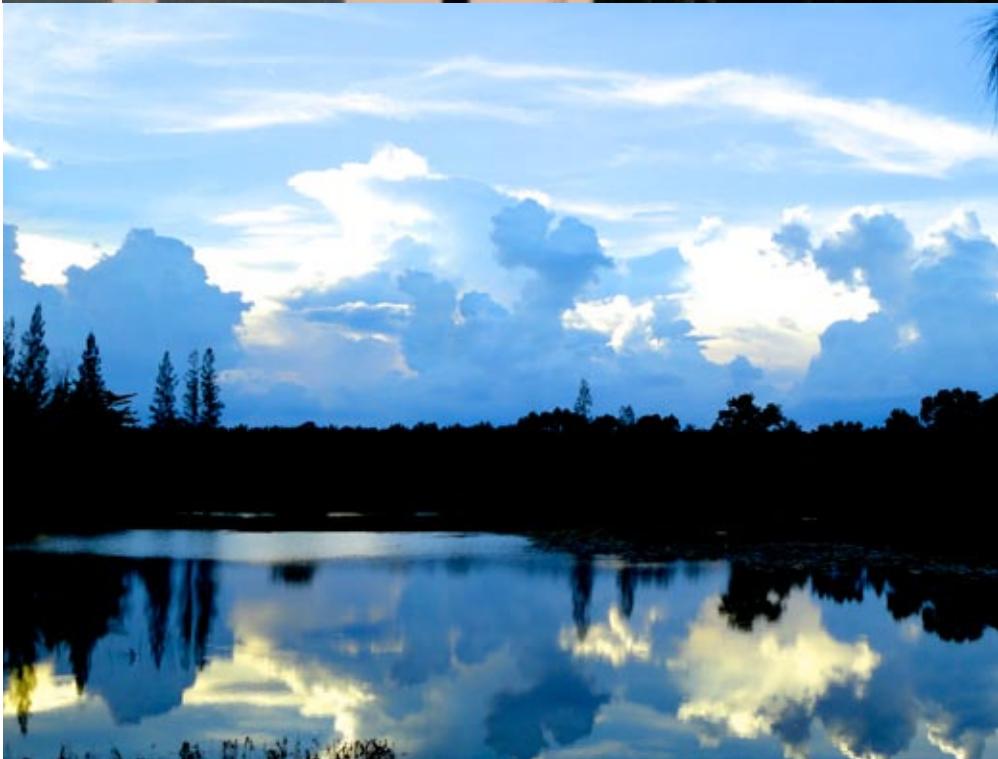


Places



Clockwise from left: Winner - Theresa Montanarello; Jessie Larson, "Wat Muang"; Michael Hamby, "Kid"; Jill Sandiford; Chris Luebbe



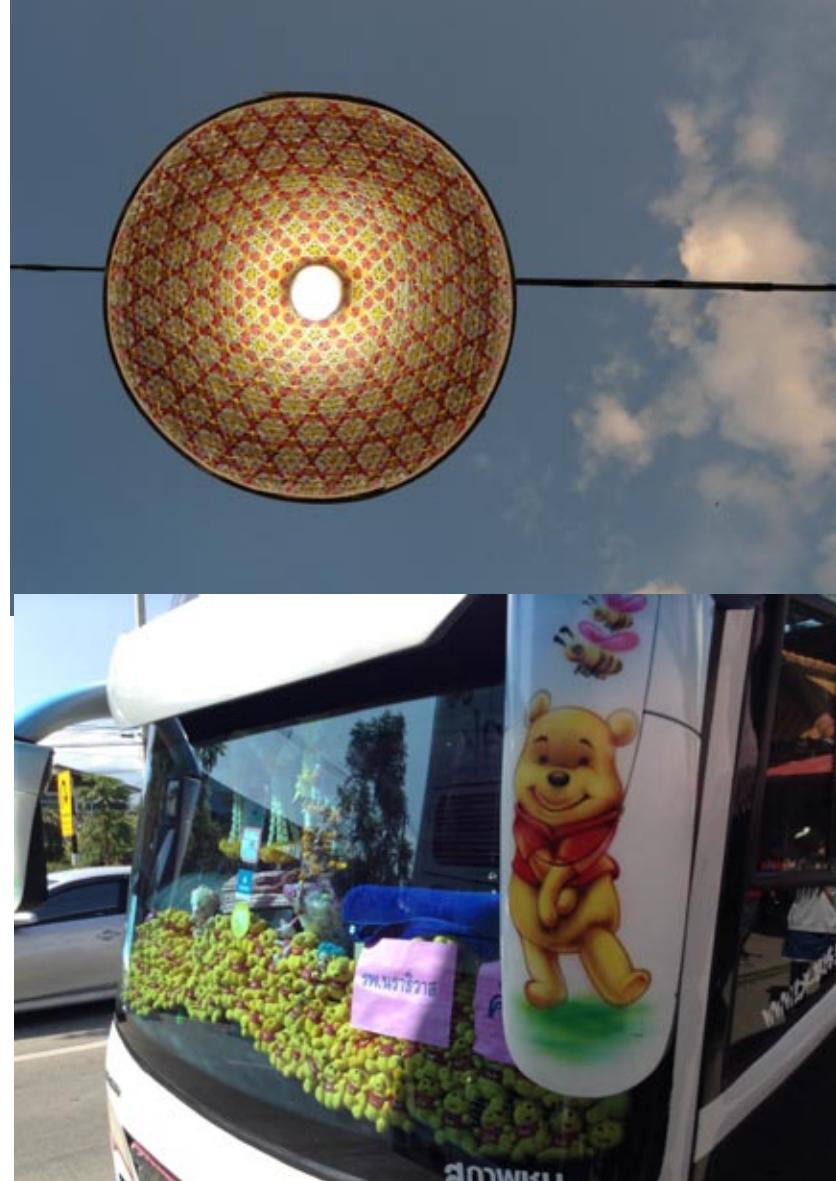


*Clockwise from top: Julia Schulkers
"Thamel Transport"; Rosie O'Connor
"Chiang Mai Sunset and Moonrise"; The-
resa Montenarello; Laura Jones*



From top: Winner - Michael Hamby, "Marbles"; Faith Eakin; Rosie O'Connor "Winnie the Pooh and Friends. Lots of Them."

Things





Clockwise from top: Julia Schulkers "Caterpillar in Himalayan Sunlight"; Jessie Larson "Mmm...Coconut Skies"; Teresa Montenarello; Michael Hamby, "Grand Palace"



Clockwise from top: Winner - Jessie Larson "Khom Loi at Loi Krathong Festival"; Jill Sandiford; Karissa Warner

Holidays

Clockwise from right:
Theresa Montenarello;
Laura Jones; Rosie
O'Connor "Not a Creature
was Stirring...For
Once"; Jes Milberg-
Haydu; Karissa Warner



To Your Health

Julia Schukers, TCCO 124

New beginnings!

The first months of the year are an equally interesting time for all three Peace Corps Thailand groups. We welcome a new group of trainees, one group is half-way through their service gearing up for reflections on what has come and what is yet to be, while one group gathers the last bits of their time here in Thailand before taking it all home. For everyone, it's a lot to process. The beginning of the year is an especially challenging time for Peace Corps Thailand volunteers, no matter where you are in your service. New Years' reflections are vaguely swimming around between our ears, sometimes lost beneath the shuffle of PCV panic. I want to reflect on an important aspect of volunteer health as we give a nod to wrapping up endings, and making room for new beginnings: mental health and physical fitness.

Create A Routine, Get Into A Habit

In the beginning, map your routine on a calendar. I start

with the first month, taking my schedule and plans into account. For instance, maybe I know that every Tuesday I'll be at school until late in the evening; knowing this, I wouldn't want to plan my workouts on Tuesdays. Once you have a routine mapped out, stick to it. Whatever you do, don't fall off. It's easy to get defeated, miss one workout then throw it all away, so be forgiving, and instead bounce right back.

Set Realistic Goals

Don't go straight for the jugular when setting fitness goals. If you are someone who rarely works out, don't try to set a goal that you'll work out 7 days a week, or even 5. Start small so you don't feel overwhelmed. Besides, if you create a reasonable, attainable goal, you'll meet that goal, feel good, and reinforce positive self-behavior. For me, I set a goal of working out 3 days a week, even when I'm most active and fit. This is a reasonable goal, and if I want to add in an extra work-

out or two, I end up feeling even better about myself. Also, think broadly with your goals, they aren't confined to workout frequency. Here are some great examples of goals: Lose 5% of body weight, be able to do 15 push-ups, run a mile in under 10 minutes, go down one clothing size, be able to carry your luggage without strain, climb stairs without getting winded, workout at least 3 days a week for two months straight. You get the idea.

Measure Your Progress

How in the world are you going to know if you have met your goals unless you track them? You're not. This part may seem trivial, but if you have something to see your progress, psychologically it will give you the motivation to keep going. With my own goals, these are the things I track: how many workouts I complete per week, my overall body weight, my body measurements (measuring inches), how many reps I complete within my sets, how much weight I can lift (be it body or resistance bands), how physically fatigued I feel when recovering from exercise (this improves and shortens after you become more fit). If you're starting a

new exercise routine, I can't encourage enough to take your body measurements; focus on more than just pounds and kilos, weight is just not enough to tell the whole story of your success. After PST, I lost only 10 pounds but at that same time I'd already lost 15 inches total from my body. Did it reinforce my workout and make me feel great? You bet. Give it a try.

Make It Fun

In Thailand we're all familiar

with the concept of sanook. After all, if it isn't fun, then why do it? I know I wouldn't. If you hate running, loathe it, then don't do it. Find a way to make it work for you. I really enjoy running, but I found that when I arrived in my village and went for a run, wild dogs chased me, so I had to go back to the drawing board. Instead, I started doing aerobic dancing instead and I love it. I get down with my bad self and crazy on my balcony with arms flying wildly in the

air and sweat dripping off my face. I follow it up with 30 minutes of strength training and I can honestly say, I love it. Not your jam? No problem, find out what is and start making a plan.

Need some help? I'm more than happy to help you. E-mail me anytime at julia.schulkers@gmail.com and we'll get something planned together to help you meet your fitness goals in 2014. Stick with it and remember, you're a Peace Corps volunteer; perseverance is already part of who you are. Good luck and Happy New Year!

Full Moon Ruminations

Jessie Larson, TCCS 125

The muted pastels darken to bold jewel tones
Sun sets as moon rises and the sky shifts
Cotton candy stripes transform to streaks of bloodstained clouds
Boldness of a white orb pulling faces
As the background fades to reflect the depth
Of a soul wandering
Eyes searching for stars
A constellation that looks like home
With none to be found
Flood lights hide the messages
Read by generations before
Leaving behind an emptiness
All red, all blue, all white
Shifting in the darkness
Conveying nothing but longing

A deep breath as eyes close to hear

Straining for a message carried by the wind
Water rushes and retreats
Leaves brush one another
Telephoning a message
Left unheard by billions
In this disconnected world
The value of this rich soil beneath these hardened soles
The scent of a thousand blossoms opening to a new crop of life
The whisper of a new history to come
As life shifts from what ifs to what has beens
Will no one listen?

We build up our own mole-hills to impressive mountains
That have only served to strand us when the tides come in
Marooning us on islands of our own making

Unable to read the stars
Hear the wind
Taste the wealth
Of the world we have been blessed with
Of the world we have taken
For granted

Come with me
Build your rafts, your life boats
Weave it from the trees you've taken too early from this
All to precious orb we call earth
Devise a sail woven by the yarns you've created
To make yourself so important
So far removed from the you I see
You stand alone, as I do
Wind at your back, begging you to hear
Tide at your feet, calling you forth
Sail to me
Be free

Tales from the Beyond

Kermit Krueger, 6

If you're less than 60 years old, you probably do not care to know what any person living today was doing the day JFK was shot. But I'll tell you anyway. I was at the Teachers Training College of Mahasarakham, Thailand, and was leading one of my first-year classes through language drills. Suddenly, the college chancellor came in with another teacher who continued the class, while he told me the terrible news. But because you probably don't want to know about that, I will tell you that during training, we were lectured about the inevitable "culture shock" that would beset us virtually the moment our plane landed in Bangkok, sometime near midnight.

After gathering our luggage, we were stuffed into a bus that careened through the dark and dropped us at some hotel (not one of the fancy ones, of course) an hour or so later. It wasn't urban noise that awakened me from my short nap on the bus (I'd been living in New York City the previous year while in graduate school), but the unique smells of Bangkok, intensified by the humid climate.

My assignment to the heart of Isan was not shocking, I'd grown up in the rural Midwest. Mahasarakham

had about 5,000 people then, 20 times the size of the villages where I grew up. In the market, I could buy Fab detergent to wash my clothes and Colgate toothpaste. Had I an automobile, there was a service station owned by an American oil company called Cal-Tex. It featured a big star just like a once-famous oil company in the USA. Yes, most roads were unpaved, but that was also true in the Midwest 50 years ago. But Mahasarakham had a movie theater, a horse track, a cock-fighting ring, a Thai boxing arena and, from time to time, a traveling, outdoor opera! Aside from movie theaters, Albert Lea and Howell, the county seats back home, had never offered such entertainments.

I found differences, but no surprises, in this new world; my students were shocked to see their teacher writing with his left hand. Never mind that my first-grade teacher in southern Minnesota was shocked to learn she had a left-handed child in her class whose parents said, "If he wants to be left-handed, let him be." So what, where, when was the predicted shock and new beginnings? My students had more to adjust to than I did. I was home.

After my Peace Corps stint, I found myself back in New York City to complete my graduate education. The noise and bustle of the world's greatest city, the fumes of its buses and trucks, its subways, its taxi drivers that lived on their vehicle horns, were compounded by all the people-everywhere. Bliss! This, too, was a world I knew.

However, after a couple days I realized I'd run out of toothpaste. No problem! There were stores just a few blocks away. My next class was late in the afternoon, so I wandered down Broadway to the first likely shop. Of course, they had toothpaste. And not just Colgate, but more brands than I ever remembered existing, in more sizes and colors, and ... I couldn't move, much less make a choice, any choice. I left empty handed. The next day a fellow student, who knew of my plight, bought some toothpaste for me, and probably thought I was more than a little mad.

And don't even ask how my friends responded about a week or so later, when we went to the local Chinese restaurant on 125th Street, and I insisted good etiquette required one person pay the entire bill, and then we'd figure out each person's share later, and elsewhere. I could only think, "How crass those Americans are! They need to get some culture."

Thai Youth Theatre



Photos: top five, Ginny Stevens's students practicing; bottom five, Theresa Montenarello's students rehearsing.



The Thai Youth Theatre Project will be hosting its 10th annual Thai Youth Theatre Festival on February 21-23 at Chulabhorn College in Lopburi province.

Fourteen Peace Corps volunteers around the country are working with local Thai teachers and students to prepare a performance, done entirely in English, for the festival by making props and costumes, memorizing lines and performing for their local communities.