



# BUILDING BRIDGES



*"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."*

- Helen Keller

## THAI YOUTH THEATRE FESTIVAL CELEBRATES ITS 6TH YEAR

For the past six months, in rural villages throughout Thailand, hundreds of students have been practicing their Shakespeare.

Now, these youth will showcase their talents, performing on a professional stage at one of the most prestigious Fine Arts colleges in the country. With the help of a dedicated team of Peace Corps Volunteers, teachers and community members, the sixth annual Thai Youth Theater (TYT) Festival will feature 300 youth in student-directed, acted and managed English language plays.

This project stemmed from the idea that theater could provide youth with an outlet for learning English, improving self-confidence and developing a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

Participating students will come together in Thailand's third largest city, Nakhon Ratchasima, where they will perform plays for an audience of their peers. When not performing, festival participants will attend workshops led by experienced theater instructors. All student attendees are members of TYT clubs at their schools, and have been practicing their performances, building sets and designing costumes for over six months. Clubs have also been fundraising to cover the cost of transportation to the Festival.

"The TYT Festival provides clubs with the additional tools for sustainability," said Volunteer Kelly Rowe. "[The school in] Chumphon began with TYT five years ago, has attended the Festival for the past four years, and has confirmed that they will attend again in 2009."



In addition to the experience gained through TYT, students also bring resources back to their communities, and share what they have seen, heard, and learned. "When Festival attendees step into one of the most beautiful and professional stages in the country, on a college campus filled with people who have dedicated their lives to higher education and the arts, their horizons are broadened," said Rowe.

**ANNOUNCING: ALISON INC. DONATION**

The Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) and the Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI) are pleased to announce the acceptance of an in-kind donation of a training tracking system from Advance Learning, Inc., a corporation providing online learning resources for certification and standards-based learning. The donation is expected to assist Volunteers in developing local community aptitude in digital literacy and IT skills, business skills, financial and economic literacy, health literacy, and English language skills. For questions or inquiries regarding the use of these new tools, please contact Anthony Bloome, ICT Specialist in the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support.

## OPSI HAS A FEW NEW EMPLOYEES!

**Elissa Milanowski**  
Program Assistant  
RPCV Namibia

**Robert O'Neill**  
Administrative  
Specialist  
RPCV Madagascar

**Jessica Rogers**  
Intern  
RPCV Cameroon



## FAMILIES WORKING FOR FUTURES

In a small town in Ecuador (population 500), one hundred chickens have improved the lives of five area families and advanced the education of over thirty youth. The connection between 100 chickens and improved education may seem obscure—but to Peace Corps volunteer Alexis Austin, the concept was clear from the start.

Austin partnered with local Ecuadorian non-profit Creando Futuro to create an income-generating project for families with school-aged children. Five families in Muisne County participated in the project and agreed to raise, market, and sell chickens to local stores for profit. All participating families have between five and eight children or grandchildren to support. All the families have agreed to allocate a significant portion of their earnings from this project to help support their children's education.

Partnership funds helped pay for chickens, corn, eating and drinking trays, and expensive vitamins and vaccines. This assistance gave these families a start in the business world, and progress is being monitored by Creando Futuro. However, the success of the program will ultimately depend upon the dedication of the participants.

"So far things are going really well," said Austin. "The chickens are growing fast, there are determined markets, the families are very excited, and future options for investment and sales are being explored."



## INTERNATIONAL NIGHT: DANCING, FASHION, AND FUNDRAISING

The auditorium was filled with cheering friends and family. The students sang, danced, and proudly displayed the traditional clothes of their heritage. The energy filled evening was John F. Kennedy High School's "International Night," and all the proceeds were donated to the Partnership Program.

Near the end of last year, our office received an e-mail from students in Silver Spring, Maryland wanting to learn more about the Partnership Program. Vanessa Lopez, Jewell Porter, Julia Cha, and Leonard Greig are enrolled in JFK High School's Leadership Training Institute (LIT). The Institute empowers students through a rigorous interdisciplinary education, which emphasizes experiential learning, community service projects, and leadership theory and application. As part of their culminating senior year project, the students were tasked with planning a fundraising event from start to finish.



These four took on a monumental event: they coordinated almost 100 students for "International Night," which included a variety of performances and a fashion show celebrating the many cultures represented in their school. In addition to the ticket sales, the students put together a refreshment stand, and conducted a bake sale during school hours to raise money for the Partnership Program.

In the end, Vanessa, Jewell, Julia, and Leonard raised over \$2000 to donate to the Partnership Program Global Fund. Once the final amount is processed, the students will pick a project to fund and see the results of their hard work go into action!

Students from JFK High School pose with the colorful check that they made for the Partnership Program (From Left to Right: Vanessa Lopez, Jewell Porter, Julia Cha, and Leonard Greig)

The Partnership Program staff would like to thank the students and teachers at J.F.K High School for all their dedication and hard work!