

Voices of SEAYLP

SOUTHEAST ASIA YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Volume 3, Issue 1 ♦ Fall 2015



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Director's Message



We were delighted to welcome the 61 participants of SEAYLP 2015 this past spring to Northern Illinois University for this exceptional U.S. Department of State Program. Reading the group's contributions to this issue of Voices of SEAYLP only reinforces the value we see of bringing together students and adult leaders from all over Southeast Asia for three weeks. As you discovered during your time here, SEAYLP is not only a rare opportunity for each of you to learn about the US and your neighbors in the region, but also a chance to engage with and be inspired by each other. It is heartening to see the impressive work you have done on your action plans so far. We look forward to staying in touch and wish you all the best in your endeavors ahead.

- Judy Ledgerwood

We were delighted to welcome the 61 participants of SEAYLP 2015 this past spring to Northern Illinois University for this exceptional U.S. Department of State Program. Reading the group's contributions to this issue of Voices of SEAYLP only reinforces the value we see of bringing together students and adult leaders from all over Southeast Asia for three weeks. As you discovered during

What's Inside?

Inside is a celebration of SEAYLP and (even more so) SEAYLPers!

This is a place where we can reminisce about the program and share our individual successes and adventures with each other and the world. We have started the Action Plans from 2015 and then get an update on 2014 plans! Then on to articles about the latest session.

POST CARD

Brunei's Kitani Project addressed poverty in Brunei. They visited families in two impoverished districts and took pictures in order to promote their cause. The group recruited a hundred volunteers to assist. They divided volunteers into five groups, with each group responsible for a family in each district. The group used social media to recruit and publicize their event. They spread the word at their schools and are conducted a drive for clothes and other necessities which they donated to the families shortly before Hari Raya in mid-July. They were able to donate a huge amount of food and even some furniture to the families. They will raise additional funds for the families and children in November with a charity run. While waiting for the project approvals, they are still welcoming new volunteers to run the project.



Kitani Project

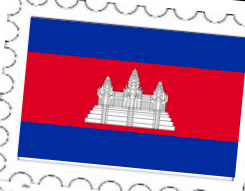
Aa'inaa, Azree, Chloe, Luqman, Maryam, Fash, & Erna



KITANI
CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

POST CARD

Cambodia's Library of Hope serves the underprivileged minority community in Ratanakiri Province. They met with school leadership, recruited volunteers, and got sponsorships to rehabilitate a building. On May 30, they began regular volunteer days each Sunday, cleaning, painting, repairing shelves, and preparing their library. The library, which officially opened in October, has had books donated from many sources. They also decided to use the remaining funds from SEAYLP mini-grants to purchase books. Further on, SEAYLPers will also teach English to kids in the library. They hope to attract children to the library to learn independently and from their elders, to gain enough resources to attend high school and thus build a brighter future.



Library of Hope

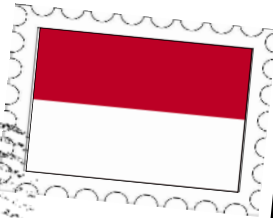


Cheon, Kalypso, Grinoo, Polin, Queenie, & Bond



POST CARD

Indonesia's Green Lantern Project strives to raise support for a green and healthy environment. Using social media, public speaking, and brochures they will educate and recruit others to be more environmentally aware and active. In addition to leading workshops, they will donate garbage bins to local schools and communities. Rizki conducted a beach cleanup on June 7 with a friend. They had a big impact on their local beach! In Padang, Willy and Raihan arranged campaigns in July and August. Meanwhile, Fischea and Zahid did a "No Rubbish" program in their school, which as one of its activity, required students to pick up trashes on their way to school to raise their awareness. They are now seeking the best time to meet up and run their bigger project.



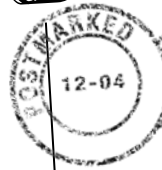
Green Lantern
Project

Rizki, Dennis, Fischea, Raihan,
Willy, and Zahid



POST CARD

Laos's Young Elephant Project seeks to improve the lives of children in their community. They aim to invest in education, elicit creativity in local children, and provide better understanding of environmental issues. They say: "Invest in education, invest in the future." After receiving permission from school administrators, they recruited volunteers to help in their summer course for 100-200 students, ages 8-12, from July 27-August 21. They not only focused on teaching English, math, science, and environmental education, but they also included sports, arts, and sanitation. Now, the team is doing project evaluation and hope to repeat the same program next year.



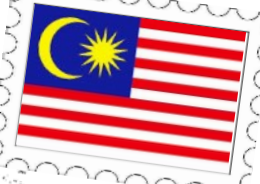
Young
Elephants
Project

Kate, Lita, Nonu, Bibi,
Taya, & Sonlavy



POST CARD

Malaysia's Hygienic River, Better Life Project will clean up the river in their community and raise awareness about its care. The team aims to raise awareness of the importance of river conservation. They will lead a campaign to clean up the polluted rivers in their town. Praven helped to lead cooperative work (gotong royong) in his community to clean up. Other group members are working on getting permission and finding volunteers. As they wait for the right time to launch, they're working on publicity on Facebook and on their blog (<http://seaylpmalaysia.blogspot.com>), which includes various topics like the impacts and sources of pollution. The group will launch the main campaign and activities in October and November.



*Hygienic River,
Better Life*

*Hamsa, Praven, Eripen, Zurie,
Vineysh, & Noora*



POST CARD

Myanmar's Now and Forever Project assisted a monastic school by providing funding and student and teacher training. They conducted training sessions with young kids in communication, cooperation, leadership, and conflict resolution. They used games and activities they learned during SEAYLP. They did a training course for teachers in public speaking and fundraising. They also raised funds for the monastic school, but wanted to give the teachers the skills to making funding stable and sustainable. They completed their project on May 27, but are interested in continuing work on other projects.



*Now and
Forever*

*Susu, Yoon, Nathan,
Peter, Kiki, & Mikey*



POST CARD



Project SHIELD

The Philippines's Project S.H.I.E.L.D. stands for Safety, Hope, Integrity, Education, Love, and Dedication. They raised awareness of disaster preparedness and response capacity through information drives in their community to contribute to lives saved and reduce the impact of natural calamities. On June 6, they launched their project in an area strongly impacted by the typhoon in Tacloban City. They distributed school supplies and information on disaster preparedness and response to 200 children, grades 1-3. They used games and storytelling to make it fun. 100 seedlings were also planted or donated to the *barangay* to raise awareness of the environment.



Bianca, Pine, Jenzel,
 Jong, Lynel, & Dean



POST CARD



Ripple Effect

Singapore's Ripple Effect Project will change attitudes and behaviors towards the elderly in Singapore. They will raise awareness among secondary school students about the isolation and neglect experienced by the elderly. They will collaborate with voluntary welfare organizations and schools and recruit youth to provide assistance to the elderly. The group is partnering with a media company called The Hidden Good, which produces short videos about good works. They will be producing a video in August and September, and meeting with students and conducting volunteer work with youth and elderly in November and December following exams.



Candy, Daniel, Leonie, Fion,
 Siew Woon, & Hafiana



POST CARD



Trash is
Not Trash

Thailand's Trash is Not Trash Campaign aims to clean up schools and reduce waste through providing recycle bins and collecting recyclables. They collected recyclables, especially water bottles, to be transported every two months and sold, with funds being used to fund future projects or local charities. Anthony had great success with the bins at his school, daily posting pictures of the bottles rescued from the trash. Build, Porsche and Natsit conducted sessions to educate others about trash while Nadia spoke with her principal regarding the project. They are having some struggles in implementing at all their different schools but they are pressing on in their efforts!

Nadia, Natsit, Build, Porsche,
Anthony, and Bell



POST CARD

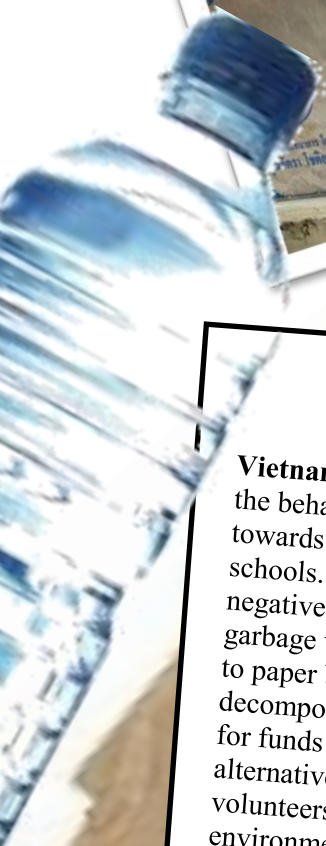


Hands in
Hands

Vietnam's Hands in Hands Project hopes to reform the behavior of local canteen owners and students towards the use and disposal of plastic bags at their schools. Because plastic bags from the canteen negatively impact their campus environment and this garbage will outlive them, they are working to change to paper bags, which can be recycled or will decompose quickly. They will collect cans to exchange for funds and to seek corporate sponsors to provide alternative bags to canteen owners. They have recruited volunteers and will train volunteers to support environmental awareness and leadership. They use their mini-grant funds initially to provide bags for the canteen owners. Now, they got 800 bags and ready to distribute them to 4-6 canteens owners.



Edward, Kira, Amy, August,
Jo, Victoria, & Nguyen





SPOTLIGHT: SEAYLPers On the International Stage

Aek of SEAYLP 2014, has continued his international adventures by being part of Sunburst Youth Camp in Singapore in December 2014. While he was there, he met up with other SEAYLPers including Yanling, Magarine, and others. At home in Laos, he connects to both his local community and the global community as the Vice President of AIESEC in Laos. Aek is also applying for YSEALI: StartUp Weekend in Malaysia. I wonder who Aek will meet there?

Jason Wee of SEAYLP-5, like many other alumni, is currently studying abroad. He is completing an International Baccalaureate Diploma at a United World College in Santa Ana, Costa Rica, a school with 165 students representing 66 nationalities. Recently, he was elected Student Council President there. Jason was recently featured in TEDxUWCCR as one of the speakers, discussing LGBT rights in Asia. He will soon be applying to universities in the US.

Patcharapon Podamrongchai (Pon) of SEAYLP-6 is currently in Jönköping, Sweden. There he is the camp director for a 3-week international youth peace camp called Children's International Summer Villages.

Mar Louie of SEAYLP-6, along with many other alumni, attended the US-ASEAN Young Leaders Summit, in Jakarta, Indonesia - a SEAYLP alumni reunion. In December 2013, he attended the

US ASEAN LEAD Summit, another international event for US Embassy Alumni in the Philippines. There, he was able to meet with some other SEAYLPers again. And in 2014, Louie attended JENESYS 2.0, an exchange program in Japan. Louie is also the head of YSEAL in Northern Luzon, which is pretty exciting, too!

Bhibii Somphakdy of SEAYLP 2014, has also gone to National Institution For Youth Education in Japan in 2014, where she sharpened her understanding of Japanese cultures. In Thailand, Bhibii was part of the Thailand ASEAN Youth Camp or TAYC, which she's been part of three times!

This is only a partial list of international engagements for SEAYLP alumni, and many more SEAYLPers are using their experience here as a starting point, but their adventures don't end when they return from this program. They are continuing to search out new experiences and new opportunities to lead locally, regionally, and globally. Alumni are scattered from Asia to the US, and into Europe and Latin America. Programs like SEAYLP and the ones mentioned here by program alumni are helping your generation be more connected and more active in changing the world regardless of the location and situation of your birth. Keep rocking the world, SEAYLPers!



SEAYLP Thru the Years

By Rai Nihei

Some vital statistics on SEAYLP at NIU, 2009-2015:

Participants

Youth	254	Adult	54
Brunei	36	Philippines	31
Cambodia	31	Singapore	31
Indonesia	37	Thailand	31
Laos	22	Vietnam	30
Malaysia	28	USA	26
Myanmar	31		

Total: 308

Staff

USA	27
International	2
Total	29

That's a lot of people to share an experience with! Imagine the connections available in our alumni community alone!

We've had 49 country groups return home to carry out as many as 50 action plans! That's lot of service and change occurring in Southeast Asia!

At NIU, we've learned new things each year, tried new activities, and learned more about the cultures and interests of one another. After 6 years, my favorite part is still getting to meet every new participant and watch them as they grow.

Vietnam By Nodi

As a part of our action plan, team Vietnam organized a summer camp for disadvantaged children at the local SOS center. Although it was only for one day, we made unforgettable memories with the cute kids there. We had a lot of fun with games. There was so much happiness, hope, and even tears when talking about our dreams. When the camp was finished, I received many beautiful paintings



from a child who told me she dreamed of becoming a painter in the future. The paintings were not perfect, but the sense of warmth I could feel was fabulous. I will always treasure them as some of the most meaningful gifts on my life. Above all, the greatest

thing after the camp is that not only did we teach the children about communication and teamwork skills, but we also learned a lot from them. We really admire their optimism and great effort to overcome difficulties in their lives. The rest of our action plan will be carried out soon. We feel happy being able to contribute to our community. Finally, we now understand why giving joy means getting joy!

Little Candle for Palu'e

By Yesenia



Palu'e, also known as Rokatenda, is a stratovolcano that forms the small island of Palu'e, north of Flores Island in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. In August, 2013, the mountain erupted and claimed many

victims, both adults and children. Those who survived were living in a refugee camp in Sikka regency. This disaster had a devastating impact on their economy and psychology (especially the children's). Many of the people currently need food and access to clean water. The children are not as cheerful as before, so that's why, as our action plan, we set out to help them recover from the trauma. Every Saturday and Sunday, we visit the refugee camp with volunteers from Frater Senior High School and Nusa Nipa University.

We entertain the children with many exciting games and activities. We raise funds to buy stationary and uniforms for the children, in order to support their studies. Knowing that we successfully bring their smiles and laughter back is really touching. I know that not all scars show and not all wounds heal, but we try our best to make the children feel better. We will continue doing our program every weekend--we are getting more volunteers!--and we do hope it continues to make the children of Palu'e happy.

Indonesia By Revi

Our target is 60 children from orphanages in Jambi. We invited them to become agents of change to promote cleanliness and a sustainable environment for Jambi. We asked for support from the government and received high appreciation and full support from the city mayor and the sanitation working groups of Jambi. Lita, Harry, and I want to do the action plan on a large and comprehensive scale, so we thought to change the participants target, but remain fo-

cused on our goal to raise people consciousness to care about environment. On Wednesday, December 17, 2014, we proudly finished our action plan under the theme, "We are Youth Heroes of Environment will Save the World in Our Hands." There were 100 participants from 16 high schools around Jambi. The event was started by giving experience and skills we gained during SEAYLP 2014 to the participants. At the end of our event, all participants signed an agreement on a big



banner which is a symbol that we are all ready to play an active role in realizing the Jambi city's motto, "BANGKIT" 2016 that stands for Clean, Safe, Sustainable Development, Autonomy, Beautiful, and Religious.

Thailand By Supang Chiraratawan

Apart from lifetime bonding and the success of SEAYLP 2014, the participants who have been well-groomed and exposed to the new culture are doing our best to share what we have gained for the benefit of our community through our action plan. As for the six Thai participants of SEAYLP 2014, we have initiated a project called ‘Veggies4U’ or, in Thai, *plook pak rak dek*, which aims to

- 1) promote self-dependability of the vulnerable groups in Thai society through home-grown vegetables which can provide a good source of both food and income,
- 2) encourage vulnerable groups to recognize their social worth and increase their self-esteem while raising awareness within the community of Thailand in order to provide more opportunities to vulnerable citizens, and

3) create more green space in small areas with the purpose of increasing the amount of oxygen.

We have started our pilot project with The Hub Saidek Youth Club, a non-government organization run by Childline Thailand Foundation, which takes care of about 60 community and street children. We conducted our first event on June 21, 2014. Activities included teaching community children ages 15 and under how to grow vegetables in pots, organizing an art session, and providing lunch and snacks. We continued our second event on July 26, 2014 with about 15 street children over 15.

This time we grew various types of vegetables in 14 raised beds on the roof of the office of The Hub Saidek. We also donated US\$400 to have the shades repaired. Six weeks later, the vegetables were ready to be harvested for the chil-

dren's healthy meals.

Besides the fun, we have not only learned how to plan, how to work as a team, and how to solve problems, but we also figured out how fortunate we are to share what we have with those who don't.

With great support and cooperation from parents, friends, staff at The Hub Saidek, and members of the International Exchange Alumni (IEA) as well as the Media and Cultural Section of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok and the mini grant from the Department of State, we were able to help them long enough to make them believe in living up to their potential as well as to promote a more sharing and caring society.



Singapore targeted primary schools to visit for their outreach program and are

setting a date that is appropriate for their presentations. They will do a trial presentation of their outreach program at their school before carrying out the program, in order to gain experience and review and improve the project before going out to the primary schools. Ms Diyana will set a date when they can present during the school's assembly period.

Vennice has completed the logo and designs of freebies while YanLing has completed a draft of the comic strip. For the logo, they chose bright colors and cute drawings to attract children's attention. Freebies include notebooks, stickers, bookmarks and wristbands. They will prepare goodie bags with a sticker of the logo inside to create more awareness of our project name.

The comic strip is designed to be interactive for primary school children, printed in black and white so it can serve as a coloring book. The comic follows Albert who ignores his sister and wastes his food. At night, he dreams of Mr. Food who chases after him and forces him to realize the

consequences of wasting food. There will also be a mini poster full of tips on how to save food inside the booklet for readers to tear it out and paste on their walls as a reminder. A word search and maze game are included, too.

Jun Jie and Yuanjie interviewed students regarding food waste as part of their publicity and promotion efforts to be posted online. They will use this interview video to correct misconceptions and gauge students' knowledge regarding food waste. Junjie has created a photo montage to share with the students about our SEAYLP Program and tell them about our experience. Check in with Singapore at:

www.facebook.com/roflsg.

Cambodia By Iyounan An



SEAYLP 2014 from Cambodia did a project mainly focused on sanitation, and our audiences were mostly high school students, 11th and 12th graders. First and foremost, our first target was in Phnom Penh. After that, we decided to expand our project to another province,

Siem Reap. Over this period of time, we have conducted 2 schools in the capital, and 3 schools in Siem Reap. During the presentation, we have seen that most of the people are being educated and therefore, it shows how much they care about our environment so far. We did evaluations at the end of the presentation to see if something needs to be done to improve our projects. For some schools, games were introduced to warm the students up before going through presentation and slideshows by CYCers. We have gained so many likes on our Facebook page, approximately 3200 so far. This is because our project has spread tremendous

benefits to our society as a whole. Our team is thankful for our fans.

In Phnom Penh, our presentations were presented half a day with 2 volunteers helping us conducting the whole workshop. However, in Siem Reap we conducted our workshop all together without any volunteers.



Malaysia By Sakinah

Our action plan is about environmental issues in our community. Since our community is quite dirty and it is quite unpleasant for people especially tourists who visit, we decided to raise awareness among the students. There are six of us altogether: the adult leader, Dr. Lutfi Amri(Sir), Sasikheeran(Sasi), Saktivel(Sakti), Karanmohan Singh (Karan), Nur Akmal(Akmal) and, Wan Nur Sakinah(Sakinah). Firstly, we created a report and sent to our State Education Department. It was about "The Trip to The United States" and informed them about our action plan that we would be doing soon. After informing them about the event, we sent more detailed information to them about the event. Next, all six of us that went to the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP) discussed our action plan that we called "The Green Festival" and proposed ideas on what we should do to make this program

a successful and useful event for the community. Our adult leader delegated work to each of us and he created a timeline, detailing our responsibilities. To make sure everyone did their part, we chose Sasi to be our leader. We will report to him what we had done so far. Since Akmal, Karan and Sakinah are from the same school, SMK Derma, we decided to organize the event in this school.

We knew that we cannot handle this event ourselves, so we sought help from the teachers and also volunteers among the students from SMK Derma. The Green Festival was divided into three parts: Student Convention, Community Service, and Exhibition. Our adult leader and Akmal were in charge of the Student Convention, Sakti and Sasi were in charge of the Community Service



and lastly, Karan and Sakinah were in charge of the Exhibition.

During The Green Festival, we faced some problems when the Community Service was overdue from the time allocated. But, we still managed to handle the problem even though we had to start our closing ceremony a bit late. Our event went successfully and which would not have happened without the help of our community members.



Northern Illinois University

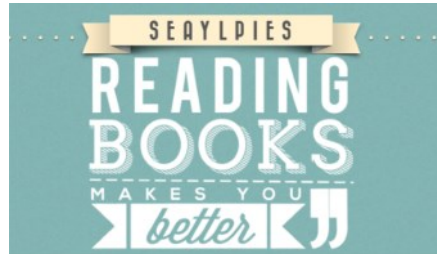
Philippines By Justine

SEAYLP is undoubtedly one of the most unforgettable experiences imbued in one's life forever. Engraved with the teachings and abilities gained from the program, we continue to venture off, trying to change the world we are living in today. And this very ideal has begun its way through the representatives from the Philippines.

"Don't read!" is our paradoxical project theme. But, this statement has grown to far more than that. As of today, within the immediate vicinities of our hometown, Tarlac, and even with the close provinces surrounding it, the contagion of the "Don't read!" phenomena has begun. Countless volunteers have joined us in our endeavor to revive the Filipino culture of reading also known as "sailing on a sea of books."

During the early parts of implementation, we targeted the population we are more in touch with, youth. We asked them to take a simple 'selfie' with their favorite

book, add their favorite line from that book and then post it on social media with our hashtags. Sure enough, the word spread like wildfire and without realizing, we had tons of people joining the activity. You can check



our page to see for yourself!

We also launched storytelling and a puppet show. The storytelling went just as planned, except for some minor technical difficulties, and it was definitely a success. The puppet show went just as magnificently, as the youngsters we encountered were dazzled not just by the puppets' intricate designs, but also how the world of reading stories is more than meets the eye. These two activities required huge amounts of effort but fortunately, we made it

through without flaw. We were able to make the group happy and accomplish our objective: to promote reading.

Afterwards, with excessive amounts of extracurricular activities and conflicting schedules, our progress was momentarily put to a stop. But, after awhile, we were back on track.

We visited several libraries which we could partner with in promoting our agenda and found some who were willing. We have contacted companies in addition to libraries to partner with us in our project. After getting support, we will resume implementation of our plan, to hold a conference in a large auditorium, and to invite several authors to attend and assist us in upholding the habit of reading.

We've become quiet momentarily, but we guarantee that this action plan will be accomplished without fail and that we will be able to give justice to the opportunity we were given there in the United States. Wish us the best of luck!

Laos By Nou Anousone

Lao participants did a project called "Start from you to the clean communities" that seeks to create fresh environment and good sanitation by fostering increased Lao engagement and raising awareness of environmental sustainability. We also created a Facebook page, "SEAYLP LAOS 2014," which has over 2,500 members. Our team has been working to get our action plan up and running, with strong support from the local officials, schools, and the US Embassy. We worked with individual participants' families, friends, and conducted presentation workshops to spread the knowledge that we

received during SEAYLP 2014. Each of our families and friends had a better understanding of littering and environment issues. Our families and friends separated garbage into 3 trashes: recycle, waste, and battles and cardboard boxes (pictures below). We had a long term project to clean communities on the first Saturday morning every month. For the goal to be achieved in the next few months, we will have an awareness campaign at schools we had already contacted to donate rubbish bins, pick up litter, and conduct charity events. Beyond words of our project, our community is

cleaner because of SEAYLP, our environment awareness has increased because of SEAYLP, almost everything is better because of SEAYLP. We really appreciate SEAYLP to let us have a wonderful exchange program, and to developing a better comprehension of environmental issues in the world.





Rai

Hello. I'm Maria Nihei, but to most of you I'm just Rai. I've been working with SEAYLP since it started at NIU and I have met 308 SEAYLPers now! But for those who don't know me, or don't remember, an introduction. At the beginning, in 2009, I was a graduate student in Global and Asian History, with an interest in Malaysian and Indonesian cultures and languages and educational exchanges, especially the Peace Corps. Since then, I've finished my Master's, co-authored a book on the history of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, begun a second Master's in Adult and Higher Education, and I was even host family for another program. I've enjoyed learning about people and cultures from around the world since I was just a little kid at Girl Scout Camp, following around counselors with funny accents. My interest in travel and exchange grows all the time. It's an honor every year to meet the wonderful students that come over with SEAYLP and other international programs through the university. It's also fun to get to know new partners on campus in different college and departments. In my free time, I like to draw, make crafts, sew, read, hang out with my two cats, and ride my bike when the weather permits.



Rachael

Hi! My name is Rachael. 2014 and 2015 are the year I worked on SEAYLP. This program is life changing for everyone involved, even staff. It was so hard saying goodbye to the 2015 participants, but meeting and getting to know them was worth the sad heart. Even though I don't work for SEAYLP anymore, I can't wait to meet all the amazing people who will be coming in 2016!

In addition to SEAYLP, I'm looking forward to many exciting experiences in 2015. My two dogs will continue to be my adventure buddies and this year I have another little partner to the mix, too, when my first baby arrived in June. I recently went back to school at NIU to obtain an MA in English, with an emphasis in TESOL, and have also started learning Bahasa Indonesia. I'm hoping to travel to and work in Indonesia or Malaysia in the future; it's exciting that, because of SEAYLP, I'll have so many friends waiting there for me when I do get to visit.

Hi SEAYLPERS, I am Cho Mar Aye, some of you guys know me as Jezzie. You can call me either Jezzie or Cho. I am a graduate student here at NIU. Like you, I am from a Southeast Asian country, Myanmar. My background is in Computer Science and I worked as an IT trainer in Myanmar. I worked for a few years in oversea education services for a company that gives counseling services for those who want to study abroad especially to Singapore, Australia and the United Kingdom. I moved back to IT environment as a system analyst after graduating from National University of Singapore.

After five years working, I've come back to school.. IT is ever-changing and I wanted to polish my knowledge. I am pursuing a Master's of Science in Computer Science at NIU to extend my knowledge. Here, I have a chance to participate in SEAYLP 2014 and looking forward to meet up with the upcoming SEAYLP program. It's my pleasure to be part of the youth leadership program for the Southeast Asian region, which is near and dear to my heart.

Cho



SEAYLP Staff

Hello! It's me Basori, new staff member with SEAYLP. Besides working with SEAYLP, I am also a student at NIU. I am taking my Master's in Instructional Technology. Actually, I had been to NIU before because from Fall 2013 to Spring 2014 I got a Fulbright scholarship. I enrolled as a student-at-large and became a foreign language teaching assistant for Bahasa Indonesia. Then, I decided to come back because I love NIU.

Back in my home country, I taught Indonesian as a foreign language mostly to American scholars who visited my country. Although I have been meeting and working with Americans since that time, I still experience cultural shock here in the US. For me, it's a challenge and I am fine with that since I have always enjoyed working and meeting with people. Working with SEAYLP gives me chances to will meet SEAYLP alumni and future young talented youths from Southeast Asia who are ready to be the next leaders.

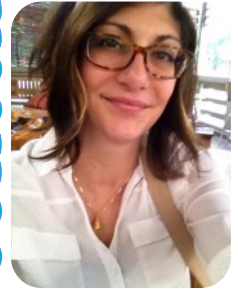


Basori

Hiii! My name is Colleen Gray and I am new to the SEAYLP staff. I graduated from NIU with a Master's degree in anthropology and Southeast Asian studies. I have traveled throughout Southeast Asia and when I graduated from NIU I moved to Phnom Penh, Cambodia for six months. While I was in school, I learned two years of Bahasa Malay and two years of Bahasa Indonesia. My Master's research focused on women's NGOs in Sarawak, Malaysia. In addition to visiting both mainland and island Malaysia and Cambodia, I have traveled to Vietnam, Thailand and even spent three months living in Brunei.

Now, I am working as the co-administrator of the new YSEALI program here at NIU. I am extremely excited to work with university students from Southeast Asia!

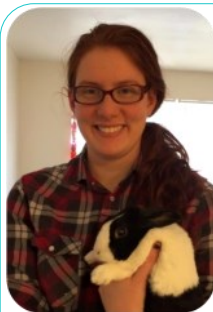
Colleen



Jordan

Over the last few years, Jordan has seen his kids grow up and become adults. His family has grown with the addition of his grandbaby, Donnie, who was two years old this past November. With his kids grown and having completed his Master's degree in Cultural Anthropology at Northern Illinois University, he decided it was time to return to Cambodia. Jordan did his research on Cambodian Americans who had been deported back to Cambodia, and he has become involved in a grassroots movement working with the community he did his research on.

He has also started teaching English at Human Resources University, and will begin teaching additional classes at Phnom Penh International University. He is planning on staying in Cambodia for two years to help the group he is working with and to gain some professional experience working overseas. He and his wife are expecting a baby in October.



Glynnis

Glynnis began her career as a music teacher this autumn, and is currently working in three Milwaukee public schools--Maryland Avenue Montessori, La Escuela Fratney, and Doerfler Public School. She sees over 1,000 kids a week! When kindergarten kids see her after school, they sing the song she thought them during the day. One funny story she shared is as follows: "So, I told one of my classes that I am from Illinois. One student said, 'How is Illinois? Is it awful?'"

FAQs for Applying to NIU

I am Ye Pyae Thu (Eric), SEAYLP-2014 alumnus from Myanmar and one of the first two SEAYLPers who came back to Huskie County as university students. When applying to be an NIU Huskie, I faced many difficulties and questions. I believe there might be many questions and details that other SEAYLPers coming back will want to know. In this article, I will present answers to the questions that students face.



Scholarship & Finances

- Although SEAYLP alumni get a scholarship for full tuitions, we still need funds for fees and expenses of about \$13,500 for the first year.
- Tuition for two semesters each year will be covered, but only for standard credit hours and classes. In one semester, a standard load of classes is 12-18 credit hours. So, you can only register for 4 or 5 classes for each semester. If you register for more than this, you must pay for credits which exceed the limit.
- In the first semester at a new university, one has to buy some personal items, such as pillows and other dorm things. The cost is about \$200-400.
- One should expect expense of textbooks, which can be \$400-700, depending on courses.



Extra Money

- Others have asked me if they can apply for scholarships to cover their expenses. There are some scholarships available, but I recommend that you apply in the second semester.
- As undergraduate students, it isn't easy to get a job until you finish your first semester.*

* Your student visa will likely prohibit you from working off-campus. If you are interested in student employment you can check online with human resources. Graduate students may look into assistantships inside or outside their department.



Housing & Dining

- Every freshman must live in a university residence hall, the price of which can be nearly three times the price of living in an off-campus apartment or house. We don't have any choice in this matter.
- NIU allows freshman students to stay in Neptune, New Hall, Grant, and Stevenson.
 - * Neptune is in the center of the campus, but its environment is like the 1960s.
 - * New Hall is the newest and most expensive dorm. These rooms are very small.
 - * Grant and Stevenson are not too bad. Although they are far away from central campus, there is a free Huskie Shuttle Bus. The rooms in these buildings and towers are generally not too bad and not too expensive.
- For dining, you need to have the unlimited meal plan which is \$1,040 per semester. It is not too expensive as you can eat many times a day in any dining hall on campus. So, you won't run out of food from 7 AM to 11 PM every day.



Eric & Basori at the Parade of Flags during International Education Week.



Application Processes

- Some ask "What should we do first to apply for NIU?"
- First, fill the online application and pay the refundable fee of \$40.
 - Then, start submitting necessary documents. This needs to be done step by step.
 - * You must send your official transcripts from your school or governmental certificates for high school graduation and other academic documents.
 - * To send these documents, school officials will provide you with the official NIU students email.
 - * The SAT/ACT is not required to apply for NIU admission.
 - * Both TOEFL & IELTS are accepted for admission.
 - Stay in touch with the officers from International Student and Faculty Office.

You don't need to worry too much as it is not very complicated.

I hope every SEAYLPer will be fine with every process of applying to NIU. In Fall 2015, there are five SEAYLP alumni at NIU and we want to have an even stronger SEAYLP alumni community. If you still have any questions, you can reach out to me, ISFO officers and the SEAYLP office. Hope to see you soon in NIU. Go Huskies.



Applying to NIU—By Iyounan An & Hnin Eaindray Lin

Min-ga-la-par!!!! My name is Hnin Eaindray Lin (aka Scarlet), and I participated in SEAYLP-2014. I am from Myanmar. After the NIU announced the NIU SEAYLP Scholarship Program, I decided to come back and continue my education at one of best public universities in the United States. I applied for the Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering Program, starting in the Spring semester of 2015. I submitted the online application in September, and was admitted to the university in October.

Getting Admitted

The admission requirements are:

- a completed NIU application
- a \$40 application fee
- final secondary school transcripts
- exam results
- proof of financial ability

More information and other necessary applications can be found at the International Admission webpage.*

It can take 1 to 2 weeks for the office to review your application. After that, they will send you an email saying whether or not you are admitted to NIU.

Documents

You also will be asked to send all of your high school and/or college transcripts, as well as your English standard test--TOFEL or IELTS--score(s) to the Office of Admissions.

For sending high school transcripts, you can either use the given online transcript program, or ask the International Student and Faculty office and send these to them.

The TOEFL and IELTS score reports must be sent to the admission office directly by the test center.

The application process is moderately difficult and takes some time to complete for high school graduates from Southeast Asia nations where GPA (Grade Point Average) is not commonly used. Therefore, the sooner you start the application, the better.

Tips and information for preparation after admission, arrival, and housing and dining can be found on the International Admissions webpage: niu.edu/international_admissions/

The Application

First of all, you go to www.niu.edu and click the admission section, then click on your program--undergraduate or graduate. It is simple because NIU requires an online application. You don't have to rush; you can come back and continue at any time. If you are applying for fall semester, applications open on September 1, and all documents must be submitted by May 1.

To start the application, you will need to create an account. You will need:

- Personal information including Social Security number, date of birth, address, and citizenship information
- High school and college/university information including school name and dates of attendance
- Payment information

After admission

After successfully completing the application and sending transcripts to the International Student and Faculty Office, I got a MyNIU account, where the admission process, what-to-do list, and other important information is located.

You will be asked to send proof of ability to pay for the equivalent of one year of fees and housing, in order to receive your I-20 form to apply for F-1 visa.

Fees

The admission fees can be paid by Visa or Master Card, and the process will be faster if you have one before the application process starts.

Finally, the journey of my admission process succeeded and I received my admission letter from the university! I was very excited by the idea of coming back to NIU and continuing my education. With this letter, I'd like to welcome fellow SEAYLP participants who are interested in studying at NIU. Go, Go, Huskies!!!

Studying in the USA By May Pwint



Saying that studying abroad in the States is an adventure would be an understatement; it is much more than an adventure!

I am finding new identities, coping with a new culture, and immersing myself in new interests. I am amazed by how much I have changed, being here in the States.

When I first arrived at Roanoke College, I participated in an outdoor adventure themed orientation program. We did an icebreaking game, which was

introducing ourselves using candy names. So, I was supposed to introduce myself like “Milky Way May.” However, coming from a country where candy names are not important, if we even

consider giving a name, it was a challenge for me to even keep up with what was going on around me. It was just the first part of culture shock, and there were a lot more of them.

Even after a year, I am still experiencing some culture shock. When I am in the middle of the shock, I would never say it is a great thing, of course. However, it really is a good thing because it opens up a lot of boundaries and shows me the diversity of the world.

Through being in a Bible discussion group, I am gaining more and more understanding of religious beliefs and the spirituality of other people. As a sophomore, my journey of studying abroad is not even half way done, but knowing that more adventures and excitements wait for me, my homesickness disappears somewhere.



Since writing this, May Pwint has completed her sophomore year and started a study abroad in Europe. How exciting!

Poughboy's Scholastic Voyage

By Zaw Lin Htet

After a few clicks on the web, my first fascination with Ohio was it's law – getting fish drunk is illegal. This is the place I will be staying for four years?

Despite its peculiar rules, I easily blended in with the community of my Midwestern college, Denison University, and was able to find out the logic behind such regulation. Alcohol intoxication in fish upsets the aquatic food chain, eventually destroying the ecosystem.

It's a blessing to be exposed to authentic American traits such as down-to-earth appearance, straightforward behavior and honesty. Going to a small liberal arts college like Denison

University gives me a lot of resources to utilize. Being part of a tight-knit community where everyone knows everyone, I am glad that I have an amazing group of supportive people to fall back on – staff, faculty and friends. The first few weeks of culture shock and homesickness was relieved by surrounding myself with caring friends, visiting the counselor office, and visiting my favorite professor's office for a thoughtful conversation about morality and his daughter's violin skills. Professors in my college really care

about students' intellectual development and well-being. I am contented with my decision to come back for my undergraduate study because a liberal arts curriculum really is designed to prioritize well-rounded academics and learning is reinforced in many ways.



New Huskies Adventure By Harry (Phan Duc Linh)



I went to NIU four years ago, during a freezing winter. It was SEAYLP Fall 2010, the third SEAYLP batch. I was a high school kid back then, and the U.S. overwhelmed me with its difference and the hospitality of the people here. So when NIU sent me the email saying that they were offering me a scholarship to come back, I was thrilled to know that then I could get back to NIU. It was in April that I received the email. I started

my school in Fall 2014. Although now I am transferred to other university, I still love NIU, at the heart of DeKalb. NIU is a good school for emerging student leaders. When I started studying at NIU, there were no troubles in the applying process, and the International Admission office helped me through all the paper work, as well as, essential preparation for coming to U.S. When I arrived, my SEAYLP host family picked me up at the airport. Rai helped me to get familiar with the surroundings and now I'm not a SEAYLPer any more, I'm a college student. Though in winter it was really cold, but I felt very warm and cozy. After a few months, I started to get along with the environ-

ment, and sometimes I felt like it is my second hometown. I was so happy really and always looking forward for seeing other SEAYLPers. SEAYLP will always make such a huge and prosperous community at NIU in the future (I will keep my fingers crossed). Come here, and we'll have a BIG PARTY! ☺



How much do you know about America and Southeast Asia?



QUESTIONS

- 1 Q. What Southeast Asian country did the current US president, Barack Obama, live in?
- 2 Q. One island in Southeast Asia is shared by 3 countries. Name three countries: _____, _____ and _____. Bonus: What is the name of the island?
- 3 Q. In which country the biggest lake in Southeast Asia located? Bonus: What is the name of the lake?
- 4 Q. Which Southeast Asian country stands out among others as having never been colonized?
- 5 Q. _____ has the highest human development index country in Southeast Asia. (Hint: it also has a very low rate of corruption.)
- 6 Q. The region called "The River of Four Thousand Islands" is located in:
A. Laos B. Thailand C. Vietnam
- 7 Q. Name three countries for which the local name of the national language includes the word "Bahasa". Bonus if you can name a fourth country who has "bahasa" as one of its four official languages.
- 8 Q. Which country in Southeast Asia has the largest population?
- 9 Q. _____ Bay in Vietnam was named one of the "New Seven Wonders of Nature."
- 10 Q. The "Golden Triangle," where the Mekong and Ruak Rivers meet, is located in three Southeast Asian countries: _____, _____ and _____.
- 11 Q. The World largest Ringing Bell (until 2000), Min Kon Khaung Laung (Mingun Bell), is located in _____ and it weighs about (90.55) tons and (26) feet long. This temple bell is rung by striking the outer edge rather than an internal clanger.
- 12 Q. Which country in Southeast Asia has the biggest land area at 1,826,440 km²?
- 13 Q. What is the famous 2,000 year-old Hindu legend, originating in India, inspires dances, dramas, and art works across Southeast Asia?

- 14 Q. Brunei produces a huge amount of oil and natural gas. It is mostly used as:
A. fuel for cars B. fuel for heating C. export for trade

- 15 Q. Myanmar has the highest mountain in Southeast Asia at 19,294 feet high. What is its name?
A. Puncak Jaya B. Hkakabo Razi C. Mount Kinabalu

- 16-26 Q.** Match each Southeast Asian country with its currency.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 16. Brunei | A. Kip |
| 17. Cambodia | B. Dollar (SGD) |
| 18. Indonesia | C. Baht |
| 19. Laos | D. Ringgit |
| 20. Malaysia | E. Riel |
| 21. Myanmar | F. Kyat |
| 22. Philippine | G. Dong |
| 23. Singapore | H. Peso |
| 24. Thailand | I. Dollar (BND) |
| 25. Vietnam | J. Rupia |

ANSWERS

- 16-26 Q.**
- 1 Q. Indonesia
2 Q. Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia.
3 Q. Cambodia. Bonus: Tonle Sap
4 Q. Thailand
5 Q. Singapore
6 Q. A. Laos
7 Q. Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia.
8 Q. Indonesia
9 Q. Ha Long
10 Q. Thailand, Myanmar & Laos
11 Q. Myanmar
12 Q. Indonesia
13 Q. Ramayana
14 Q. C. export for trade
15 Q. B. Hkakabo Razi
- SCORING**
- Total up the number of questions you got correct, plus bonus points. Post your scores to the SEAYLP Connections webpage and let see whose the ASEAN Wise
16. Brunei, I. Dollar (BND)
17. Cambodia, E. Riel
18. Indonesia, J. Rupia
19. Laos, A. Kip
20. Malaysia, D. Ringgit
21. Myanmar, F. Kyat
22. Philippine, H. Peso
23. Singapore, B. Dollar (SGD)
24. Thailand, C. Baht
25. Vietnam, G. Dong

YSEALI Experience **By Pham Thi Thu Trang**

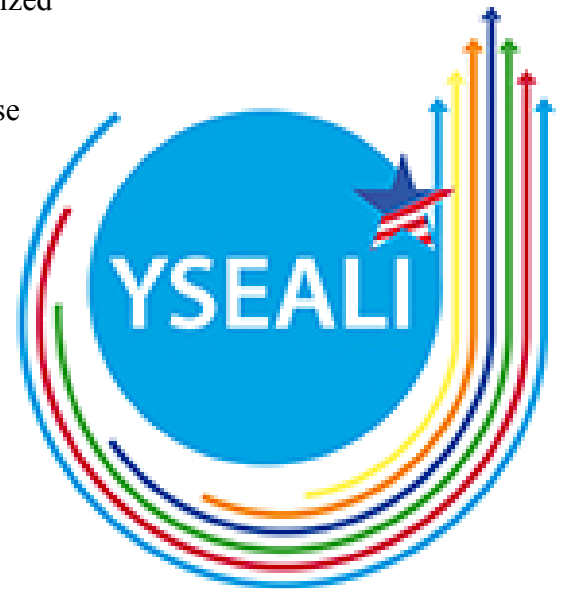
I am one of ten Vietnamese youth to attend the YSEALI event in Kuala Lumpur in April 2014. It was an eye-opening opportunity for me as an individual. I had the chance to meet up with a lot of talented, enthusiastic, and experienced activists working actively and effectively in different areas of community work.

From their stories and sharing, I felt more encouraged to continue with what I started two years ago after the life-changing experience in SEAYLP and also prepared for expanding the work to have more positive impacts on the community.

Our volunteer organization, Water Wise Vietnam, has been working on leadership training and environment protection since 2012, and at present we are preparing to run 8 more programs in winter-spring season, and the big annual project which will officially start in March 2015.

Since 2012, we have provided workshops and training to more than 100 student leaders, with the results of 27 micro projects, all of which focus on environment protections in various aspects such as education, media-campaign, and real actions. Also, we have successfully organized three exhibitions **Chance & Change** in three year to showcase the results of those projects, propagate to more students, parents, organizations, businesses, about our cause. This cycle 2014-2015, we are expecting to have 10-12 more micro projects. SEAYLP - YSEALI experience gives me more power to do well in both positions as a high school teacher and a youth leader, I'm proud to be part of the experience and I want more and more Vietnamese to be active

and ready to make the difference. For more information about Water Wise Vietnam, you can visit our FB page <http://www.facebook.com/waterwisevn>.



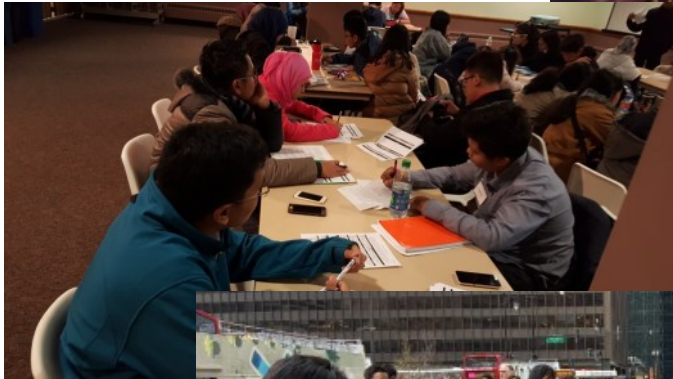
YOUNG SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERS INITIATIVE

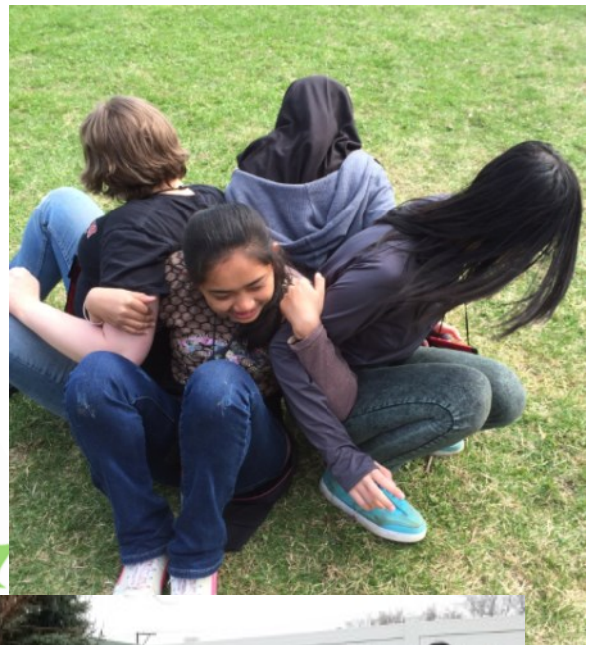
- * Northern Illinois University (NIU) has hosted the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program since 2009. Imagine how many young leaders have graduated from this program and how many action plans have been completed!
- * SEAYLP is one of the most **prestigious programs** funded by US department of state. The Global Connections and Exchange (GCE) and English Access Microscholarship Program are other exchange programs that you might want to know.
- * Many SEAYLP alumni came back to US to pursue higher education. MIT, Harvard, Yale, and NIU are some universities where they study. Maybe you'll be the next one!
- * SEAYLP offers **mini-courses!** You can get useful information and expand your knowledge from the resources provided. You can find them at: <http://tinyurl.com/seaylp-minic>
- * NIU offers **scholarships**. It provides tuition waivers to selected SEAYLP alumni. It is awesome!!! (see the last page)
- * The Southeast Asian region is inhabited by more than 620 million people. 65% of the population is under 35. Imagine the impact of SEAYLP action plans on this huge community!
- * SEAYLP alumni has now totaled over 300 participants, including the SEAYLP 2015 batch. Some of them have already graduated from university!

Did you know?

Unforgettable Moments

SEAYLP 2015





It Starts Here

By Aung Kyang Myat (Peter)



Whenever you ask a SEAYLPer what is the best presentation or training throughout the program, I'd bet 90% of all the answers will be "Theatre Arts."

Theatre Arts was a great workshop, which not only taught us the best techniques to communicate but also taught us voice projection, facial expression, body movement, symbols, and other skills. These activities released the effervescent spirits of the teenagers.

Mr. Lakhi & Rohan, the trainers, instructed and illustrated civic engagement with fascinating and amusing activities. We played a sculptor game in which one person had to be a sculptor and mold another person who acted as clay.

That one uses their diaphragm for voice projection was unbelievably proven. The importance of gestures in speaking was obviously verified. The whole day, the participants' civic engagement skills were sharpened through teamwork, games, play, and workshops.

The Theatre Arts Day, the event which turns the neighbors into a family should not be neglected. As a result of the workshop, it seems that the barrier of shyness existed among each participants was completely replaced with interdependency, collaboration for unity and unbreakable friendship,

Easter Sunday

By Linh Chi Doan Thi (Kira)

It was Easter Sunday and Ms. Rai took us to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. On the way to the church, we were impressed by the stunning views of DeKalb.

It was different from our country. Houses were not significantly bigger or splendid, but they were enormously attractive. There were many high trees along the road. Although there were no leaves on trees because of the cold winter, we still could feel their soul.

When we entered the church, we were welcomed with warm smiles and a leaflet enabling us to engage well in the service. After everything was ready, we stood to sing and pray. Then we sat down to hear lessons. We learned more about the essential role of God in Christians' life. Although none of us are Christian, we found the lessons touching and meaningful. We realized how requisite hope was to people. We were inspired by this sentence: "The end is not the end, what seems to be the end is the new beginning."

and bonding that will last until the individual's last breath.

This workshop helped to visualize the community and learn the communication skills required to be-



We prayed for peace. Then we stood up, moved around, shook hands with people and said to them: "Peace be with you". We did so even with whom we had never met before! That was a special and valuable chance for us to widen our eyes and open our hearts.

After attending the church, we set off for Chicago. I remember on the bus, Rai and Basori gave us Easter Eggs with chocolate eggs. We were all delighted! We will never forget those awesome moments!!!

come a good leader. Last but not least, the workshop serves as an entrance through which one can become a real SEAYLPer.



Knowledge to Sustain the Future By Joenillo Paduhialo II (Jong)

Exploring environmental issues and solving them through utilizing resources was the main idea for the Environmental group from the start.

Our horizons were widened after a session with Michael Coyne-Logan of "Living Lands and Waters" who taught us that with kind thoughts and simple ways we are able to help nature. We learned how essential bodies of water are beneficial to our lives and the need to protect them. Another session brought us knowledge in systematically figuring out specifics issue in the environment – such as the space, the time and the stakeholder – in a community. In another, we learned that although it is expensive, it won't hurt to pre-

serve endangered species from extinction. Even for those not yet endangered, we must protect them to balance the biodiversity. We also learned a way to convert dirty water to drinking water with an awesome filtration system. We got to taste the filtered water from a random lake and surprisingly, our tummies didn't tumble. It tasted like normal water.

Our field trip to Nachusa Grasslands gave us the drive to discover more about the environment. It was seriously cold and everyone was running around to get heat. Although one of the trip's draws



was to get a look at some bison, we didn't see any.

Throughout the thematic sessions, we learned different points of view in the field. Although our service at the Fermi Lab got cancelled, the program was a good experience and sessions inspired us to help and do more for nature.

New Years, New Friends By Sousada Sirimanothai (Bibi)



One of the most memorable day during SEAYLP was the Lao temple visit day. We went to the temple in Hampshire, Illinois, to celebrate the Lao New Year with the Lao-American community. The warmth and kindness we received from people in the community reminded me of my home country.

Having a chance to celebrate the Buddhist New Year even though we are not in our home country is an incredible experience. Not only did we had a chance to meet Lao

people living there, but at the same time it was an opportunity for our friends from other ASEAN countries to gain a good understanding about the culture of Laos, as well as Thailand, Myanmar

and Cambodia because we all celebrate the same New Year.

In Laos we celebrate the Lao New Year by going to the temple, performing *songh pha* (sprinkle water on the Buddha) and praying for good things in the upcoming new year. Some houses will hold a small *baci* ceremony to receive luck and good things, too.

During the visit at the Lao Temple, we also had a *baci* ceremony to welcome all the SEAYLPers. One of the main

feature of the ceremony was the well-wishing part. After the monks finished with chanting and blessing, everyone tied *baci* threads on one another's wrist. The *baci* thread is a white thread, which is the color of peace, good fortune, honesty and warmth. The white cotton thread is a lasting symbol of continuity and brotherhood in the community and permanence. The *baci* threads should be worn for at least three days and then should be untied rather than cut off. Some prefer to wear the threads on until they fall off by themselves.

We, the Lao SEAYLPers, were all pleased to have the opportunity to bless and give our friends good wishes because we feel blissful with joy, too.

Elementary Experience

By Candy Loo

When I got off the bus, I was really excited to meet the elementary school children. They were all very adorable. Furthermore, the children were really nice to interact with and their English was perfect as well at such a young age!

The unexpected thing was, they were wearing casual clothes. I questioned myself why they were wearing that? Shouldn't they wear a uniform? Then, I realized that the American elementary school kids could wear casual clothes to school. I was surprised. Back in my country, Singapore, we wear uniform starting everyday from elementary level.

For the school visit, we were told to wear our traditional costume in to do a short presentation. Also, we had a chance to play our traditional games.

Most of them guessed that Singapore was from China, India, or Shanghai. They were really adorable when they were guessing where Singapore was!

The elementary school visit was a really nice experience, especially spending time with the kids.



Wishful Thinking

By Sonlavy Keosavahn (Tou)

I was in the group to visit DeKalb High School. The students joined the classes with their peers and we adults had a tour around the school.

When I was standing there, I wanted to be a high school student again because there was nothing like this in my school in Laos. My school didn't have many subjects and learning tools. I was so excited to see something that's completely different from my country.

When we walked around the school, I exclaimed "wow" in almost every room we visited or looked through. The school is very modern and developed. Many subjects are taught and there are lots of activities and events.

Students have a lot of opportunities to practice their skills. I can see that students in the US have so many choices and the freedom to choose what they like and what they want to be when they grow up.

We joined two classrooms to see

how the teachers taught and how students learned. The students didn't wear school uniforms and they changed classes every hour. It's very interesting and different. I really enjoyed my time there. Even though I couldn't study in a modern place like that, I really hope that one day my home country will have the same thing.

We also visited Founders Elementary School in DeKalb. We went there with participants from Indonesia and Vietnam group. In the first class we visited, we told the students about our own country and its culture. We played games and taught them a Lao traditional dance. The students were so interested and had many questions. The girls loved to dance. They were so adorable.

In the second class, we compared differences. I was so amazed how the students were so active in the class and wanted to participate in every activity. When the teacher asked questions, almost all students raised their hands. This surprised me a lot because in the place where I am from, the students usually are shy.

It was a good thing to experience something new and nice. I hope one day soon all the kids around the world will have the same opportunities.



Unexpected Enjoyment

Joenilo Paduhilao II (Jong)

When we arrived at Feed My Starving Children, we were both excited and bored. We watched a video about the organization and instructions for service. In the packing room, we looked for the station we wanted.

As we started packing food, it wasn't boring at all. Perhaps, we even had fun during the service. Why?

- 1) It was fun doing it with our friends. We changed positions to experience different tasks.
- 2) Some of us kept the spirit up for everyone. One would "S-E-A" and all replied "Y-L-P!" Someone even cheered wrong, shouting, "SEA-Y-L" and we were like, "P"?
- 3) With the music, we didn't feel bored.

We danced through the service. It was really motivating. Especially when we finished a whole lot packaging, we got so pumped up about doing more we'd shout, "Rice please!" or "Soy please!"

- 4) We kept in mind the spirit of volunteerism, helping others in need. Some of us got to go to the storage room to pray that the food would be delivered safely to its destination.

With that service, our thoughts about the world changed. It was sad to think that many children in the global community may never get proper food. We all wondered how Feed My Starving Children got all the food and vitamins to



make the meals, and they told us they were from donors. This made us smile and we saw the world is not really a bad place to live in. There are still people who care for those who are in need. There are still a lot more people who need our help.

Afterwards, we were evaluated and we had packed hundreds and thousands of meals!

Global Youth Leaders Camp

By Anucha Chaiyamat (Anthony)



From Global Youth Leadership Camp (GYLP) at Camp White Eagle, I still remember my many new GYLP friends; Matthew, Mayra and others. I like and miss them so much.

I liked hiking at night around the mountain. In a long line, we

walked together among the dark and quiet forest. That was a great time to see everybody, touching each other's hands and ready to pass this adventure together.

We worked on team building, creating a skit, and had a camp fire, as well as having time to play sports. These were great activities that made me happy.

I also liked the food at camp, especially fried eggs, the first meal my group volunteered to serve others. That was my first time as a waiter, and I always took care of them, just how a waiter would!

And before I left White Eagle, I gave little elephant key chains to camp staff and said thank you them for taking care of us throughout camping. I was sad because I didn't want to go back home and to leave my GYLP

friends. It was too short.

On the last day I saw my friends at our Cultural Night Program and we said goodbye to each other. I still miss camp, SEAYLP staff, SEAYLP friends, my host family, GYLP friends, and everything I've done so far.





to surprise them. It's Thai boxing! It was extreme. Many people loved my performance. It wasn't only Thai boxing, there was also Thai dance. I was glad to perform. Before the cultural night

amazing for me and for other SEAYLP participants, too. It is a pity that I can't enjoy those shows again. It was a great opportunity to learn lots of cultures. I was glad to have that chance to display Thai culture.

I think this is my greatest memory in America and I'll never forget the cultural night activity. Thank you SEAYLP.

- Natsit Pinyasin

CULTURE NIGHT

I was happy to participate in Culture Night and was excited to watch other countries' shows.

There were a lot of people in the audience that day, and I had something

activity, I practiced Thai boxing almost a week.

It was my first time to present Thai boxing. Although it was difficult to me, I did my best.

I watched the cultural presentations from nine countries. I really loved those shows. It was



During Culture Night, all the participants looked beautiful in their traditional attires. They performed their traditional games or dances. It was indeed a new and enriching experience for me as I witnessed a variety of traditional dances and cultures of the 10 southeast

countries. I loved the Myanmar team the most.

The host families were invited to watch their host children perform on the stage. I was surprised to see my host mum, Laura, was waiting for me and Kira at the Sandburg Hall.

Everyone was excited because they got second chance to meet their host families. Some took videos and pictures of the performances and kept them as remembrance. We were immersed in joy at that moment,

and I was overwhelmed by the warmth and friendship of other host families. The host parents made friends with other host family while their children played or joined the performances.

That night, cameras were everywhere. Many photos and selfies were taken. I took this golden opportunity to snap photographs with my host mum and friends.

It was an awesome day that was full of sweet and unforgettable memories. Many people liked the traditional performances and some kids even joined the performances. We all smiled and laughed at the same time and put all the beautiful memories in our heart. This cultural night gave us an opportunity to show our beautiful cultures to other participants and to the Americans.

-Hamsavarnti Segar



Washington Escapades By Van Choeun

After a day in Chicago, everyone was ready for Washington, DC. We woke early in the morning and took a bus to the airport. After three hours flight, we arrived at Washington DC. Here, where we discovered and learned a lot of things about the US.

In Washington, DC, we visited Representative Adam Kinzinger of the US House of Representative and had a discussion. It related to the connection between the United States and its allies, and policy toward Southeast Asia countries.

We also went to the memorial statues of popular leaders such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. where I learned more about the changes in

American society. Those figures have brought changes for their citizens and spreads great lessons throughout the globe.

We always had different activities every day. On the second day, we divided into groups and we visited NGOs. Khmer group went to visit The Voice of America. We had a great conversation with the staff and were invited to come inside

the studio and share our experience in the US and our goals after coming back home.

Then, we visited the US Department of State and had a great discussion with diplomats! We also went to the front of the White House.

On the third day, we spent the whole day discovering the Smithsonian Institute. We saw natural history, art, and culture collected from around the world. I

enjoyed American history and the Space museum. In the evening we had our last meeting and farewell to SEAYLP staff and the alumni. On the next day, we departed from DC to our hometowns.



History of Our Lives By Lynel Ybanez Lucanas

Washington DC was the last destination in our memorable journey before we departed to our respective countries. Our footsteps took us to the historical places that I was dying to see. Near the US Capitol, we had a chance to meet an Illinois representative from the US House of Representative. We saw the White House, Lincoln

Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington Monument, Martin Luther King, Jr Memorial and lastly the Smithsonian Museum. These were sights that filled me with awe and reverence. I found myself flabbergasted at these

place in a historical moment of my life. I was with 61 amazing people from 10 different countries, plus the staff of SEAYLP made the best days of my entire life. One a few days were left so I spent every moment with them. I know all of us couldn't express how happy we were to be with each other for just 26 days but we made the best out of it. We established friendships and became one big happy family.

beautiful and inspiring places.

Suddenly, out of the blue, I noticed that I was in a historical

Gloomy atmosphere surrounded us during our last day in Washington DC. For sure we will never forget the memories and experiences, because we're making history in our lives that will never be forgotten.



Life Changing

By Willy Dwira Yudha



Let's go back to a couple months ago when everybody was excited for being chosen to participate in SEAYLP 2015. We were dancing, jumping and doing other weird stuff to express our happiness. Then, suddenly here we are, stepping foot in the United States.

I remember the first thing that Rai said, "This is going to be a life-changing experience." And it is.

At NIU we tried new food. It was very different from what we have

in our homes, but we managed to accustom our tongue. We changed the way we dressed because the temperature was freezing for us. It's funny, the local people started to wear summer clothes – because it was "warm" – but the SEAYLPers were still wearing super thick coats.

There's one important factor that made SEAYLP a life changing experience: the people. In the program, we participated in a lot of activities such as the diplomatic simulation, theater arts, and Global Youth Leadership Camp (GYLC). I reflected and realized that everything was all about a human interaction: how we act with each other, respecting differences, living side by side, etc. It is all about people.

We came from 10 different countries with many differences. Eve-

ry person has different ways of thinking and behaving. However, I noticed that it's okay to be different as long as we have understanding with each other. I notice it during the GYLC when everybody started to touch each other on the nose, arms, belly, and toes. It was so funny and powerful because that was the time when I felt we were really bonding each other. We played the human-string and supported each other at the climbing wall. Next, we played Truth-or-Dare and I dare myself to talk to Bibi from Laos. It was awesome.

Besides, I'll never forget what happened in Chicago and Washington DC. Every experience with SEAYLPers and my host family, Bob and Nancy Higdon, are too valuable to forget. Once you are in, you'll never come home the same. SEAYLP: Life-changing experience.

SEAYLP's Wonderful Experience

SEAYLP 2015 gave me a lot of new experiences. It taught me about leadership and demanded of me good leadership.

During the program, I made many friends and learned about new cultural differences that I had not known before, such as shaking hands, greeting others, and how to eat new foods. I also introduced others to Indonesian cultures, including musical instruments, dances and religion. At culture night we performed and were able to see cultures of other countries.

The most interesting experience I had was with my host family who taught me a lot about America. They took me to some tourist attractions, such as a zoo and a lake. They were very good to me

and I will not forget them. I wish I could stay longer with them.

The diplomatic simulation is an exciting experience. My friends and I tried to figure out and find possible solutions for problems which face the world. At first I thought it would be very difficult, but it turned out to be easy when we worked together.

The Global Youth Leadership Camp was also an interesting time. We built teamworking skills and learned the real meaning of friendship.

We went to a Lao temple to watch a feast for Buddha, which was new for me. I learned that we have to be tolerant and respectful of other religion.

When we return home from the

By Ahmad Rizki Nur Hakiki

US, we are required to implement a project. We chose garbage as the issue in our project. To reduce the garbage problem, I will provide trash bin in every corner of my school, and organize community service events each Thursday. Now I have a community called "Youth Care for The Environment." Because of SEAYLP, I can think more critically and I can find creative ideas to help my environment.



Dear Friends

By **Phuong Pham (Victoria)**

Dear friends I met in America:

Almost two months have gone by but I still cannot believe that I do not live with you anymore. Now, I'm trying to write something about the trip, the people, the places...but it seems that there is too much to write.

I remember the time we spent together. I miss the Holmes Student Center where we stayed in for 2 weeks. I miss the lobby where we got together before going for dinner. The lobby is memorable to the Vietnam team as we often gossiped or practiced traditional dance there. I miss the Blackhawk Annex where we had workshops and did our action plans. I miss the geese we saw around the campus. I miss Neptune, where we could relax and enjoy lunch. I miss the food: chicken wings, chicken tenders, chips, ketchup, and ice cream.

I miss my host family, Mom Nancy and Dad Ron. They are my second family. I miss the Japanese restaurant, the favorite restaurant of my team. I miss DeKalb, a peaceful town, Chicago, a skyscraper city, and Washington DC, a green city! It was like a dream and I still remember everything exactly.

Above all, I miss the people most. The staff were so friendly, humorous and helpful: Rai, Colleen, Peter, Rachel, Basori, Cho, Nancy, Rob, and Anel. You are so great! I send you a big "thank you." Without you, SEAYLP 2015

would not have been so successful.

I miss my friends, 61 people from 10 countries. You made a deep impression on me about your countries, religions, appearances, and cultures. You made me change the way I thought about the world.

You made me laugh a lot when I talked to you. Each person I talked to is a world to discover. I told myself that I must value the time I could talk to you because I know, someday soon, I would have to say goodbye, and maybe I wouldn't see you again.

So, now, you don't have to wonder why Victoria is so talkative. It is because I love you and I want to hold on to each moment with you guys. You also made me cry. I must admit, it's hard for me to cry, but two months have gone and my heart can't stop crying. Whenever I look at my phone with a thousand pictures and forty videos, I cry again. It seems too painful and heartbroken when I think of you or listen to the song "See You Again." I let my mind wander to the past, remember each face, each moment, and each event. I close my eyes and remember the sound, "Victory! Victory!" OMG, such a painful memory, because I will never hear that name again in my country.

SEAYLP - we are a big family! No matter how far we are, which religions we have, we will be sisters and brothers.



Thank SEAYLP! You gave me a golden chance to have such valuable experiences in my life. I will remember SEAYLP now and

A Poem for You

*A Poem for you!
We've just been friends and now,
you are going
Far away for many years
But please don't leave me without
knowing
How I feel as your time nears.*

*I know you are older, more
mature
And far beyond me in some ways.
But there's between us something
pure
That's given me these magic days.*

*I thank you for the loveliness
That your sweet friendships
brought to me.
Think of this poem as a caress
That says, "I love you'gracefully.*

*Say goodbye to everything, Lets
the memory sleep from now
on!*

-Victoria (Vietnam) with love

Sutters' Love

By Candy Loo

After the Theatre Arts session, my roommate, BiBi from Laos, and I rushed to get our baggage to meet our new host family at 6.30 pm outside Holmes Student Centre. We were both excited and happy, as we could spend another extra day with our host family, the Sutters. The Sutter family is a nice and helpful family with six children.

As for my American mom was really kind and cooked delicious food for us everyday! My roommate and I actually had a chance to cook our own local dish for our family. It was really nice to hear

that they liked our dishes.

My American dad showed me many interesting places in DeKalb. Now, I understand more about DeKalb culture as well!

The children were really adorable and nice. They learned a new style of eating rice—using chopsticks! I brought chopsticks for them from my home country, Singapore. They were excited to use them as they had not used chopsticks at all in their life!

The Host Family experience helped me to understand American culture



Family Fun

By Nguyen Le Hoai Anh (Amy)

Before SEAYLP, I generally had a brief idea what a typical American family would be like through movies and books. However, what I actually experienced was a hundred times more wonderful!

On our fifth day, I was waiting in front of The Holmes Student Center with my roommate, Build from Thailand, after a good time shopping at Aurora Outlet Mall. I felt extremely curious and a little nervous about my host family. A few minutes later, Rai waved her hand and called my name. Standing be-

side Rai was Ms. Shelley, our host Mom, smiling dazzlingly at us. Shelley told me “Hey, Amy, we’ve seen you on Facebook. We know that you like Harry Potter a lot and so do we!”

We said goodbye to other participants and got in the car. Our two adorable host sisters, Morgan and Genna, warmly welcomed us, talking enthusiastically about their Easter Sunday and that they had prepared something special for us. I was on the cloud number nine, and at that moment, I realized that this host family was the one that I would love wholeheartedly for the rest of my life.

The car stopped in front of a peaceful house in Sycamore. We said hello to our host Dad, Mr. Jeramie, and had a friendly talk with the family. After that, we had a trip around the house. Build and I eventually had to flip a coin to decide which room to stay in. I got heads

more. Before SEAYLP, I thought American culture was just eating an American breakfast. The SEAYLP experience made me interact with Americans and made me understand them. Overall, the homestay was a meaningful and a memorable time. Thanks to the Sutter family who has showed us

which meant I stayed in Morgan’s room that had a bunk bed with a cute slide.

We had a delicious dinner with shrimp soup and some American dishes. That night I cooked Nem—a Vietnamese traditional dish for them. Although it lacked of some ingredients, I could tell that they enjoyed the dish so much. It made me feel very happy and appreciated.

The next day, we woke up early and had a typical American breakfast with cereal! Shelley drove us to NIU and picked us up at 4.30 in the afternoon. I enjoyed every single day in this wonderful family. We talked, went shopping, played games, watched movies, went hiking, went to a picnic, exchanged cultures, and had so much fun together.

We are thousands of kilometers apart, but my host family’s kindness will stay forever in my heart.



Host Family

By Seiha Keo

My unforgettable memory was, when I first arrived in the U.S. to participate in SEAYLP 2015. Within the stay, I learned countless experiences in both formal and informal life of this multicultural nation.

I experienced numerous activities in this program, but my interest goes to the host family and the outdoor activities. I can say that they are fruitful learning sources which help me to socialize and modernize my perspectives of multicultural society. I do believe that American society is a good example.

Evidently, Americans' view on

equality is one of the most valuable perspectives that I always admired. This view is a vital practice to balance all aspects of human life, because mankind is created equally. Furthermore, equality is the only



choice to maximize fairness.

I also notice that people in the U.S. are so direct in the way they socialize within their families or

society. Once when I was with my host family, I found that all the family members were direct persons. We were free to share what we wanted. I think that the family life of Americans is less complicated than other cultures in which age is considered to stand above one another.

Interestingly, informality seems to be important for socializing in American society. After a week of staying in the US, I realized that I had cut down on culture shock and gradually was able to avoid some misconceptions. This cultural exploration helps me to strengthen my

personal qualities, confidence, and independence.

Host Family

By Punyaporn Tongrat

“Family” is one of the most precious things in my life. Without them, I’m just nothing. When you were 10, you were falling into bed late at night, knowing your mom is going to wake you up in the morning. However, we all know that you have to grow up and live your life without them someday.

The moment when I knew I got a scholarship from the U.S. Embassy was the best moment ever. That was my first time going outside my country.

It was an amazing program. Everybody was good to me. I made a lot of friends, even though I was afraid to speak English at first. During the first week, we stayed at Holmes Student Center,



but on the second week we had an opportunity to stay with host families for a week.

My host family made me feel safe all the time, even though there was a tornado. I did not feel home-sick at all. They cared about us a lot. When we were in

the sushi restaurant, they said “One of you does not like wasabi,” and that was me. I wrote it in my host family letter. They surprised me. I didn’t even expect that they would remember it.

My first time making pizza happened during my home stay. It tasted so good. I don’t know whether it’s because of the ingredients or if I was just good at making pizza. I’d assume that the second one was the reason.

There were a lot of memories with my host family especially, with my little host sisters, Morgan and Genna. They’re honestly, extremely and truly amazing kids.

I just want to say “I love you, my first host family. You gave me experiences I would never forget for the rest of my life. I love you, Hendricks!”

Focus on the Philippines

One Dive for Our Lives

By Gilda Flores (YouLead Tarlac)

June 20, 2015 - A day was set for a chosen few in order for leadership and transformation to be instilled in the minds and hearts of today's unsung heroes – the youth.

The proposed project of the SEAYLP 2014 group has come to life. Youth Leaders of Tarlac is an organization consist of Tarlaqueno youths who have the desire to devote their time, skills, and talents for the betterment of the Tarlac community under the guiding principles of character, commitment and competence.

YouLead, the organization they are now spearheading, has gathered around 35 members. The application was open to all

Tarlaquenos ages of 15-25 years old.

After carefully selecting members, the organization is now ready to make a change, or in their case, "make waves." The opening event was filled with determined smiles and positive energy. Although some were nervous, the SEALYPers still managed to raise members' confidence. Hopefully, there would be more enticing days to come for this organization. Some of the proposed projects will be completed between the June and July.

YouLead is comprised of four sectors, focusing on civic engagement, environmental

factors, economic development, and education. Once members were designated to their respective sector, a team building activity was held. The election of additional officers was held once and the camaraderie was already fully functioning.

In an ocean of opportunities, the SEALYPers once again are going against the current and thus making their own waves. This is just the beginning for all of us as more waves are bound to be created. This is our dive for the entire lifetime; this is our dive as unsung heroes.

Shield Activated

By Lynel Ybanez Lucanas

On November 8, 2013, the strongest super typhoon on record, Haiyan, struck in our home, Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines. Thousands of lives were shattered and there was nothing left but hope. This experience served as an inspiration for our action plan, Project S.H.I.E.L.D., which stands for safety, hope, integrity, education, love and dedication.

We launched our very first project, with the help of CMLI JC-REB Visayas, for one of the most devastated place in the city. Two hundred students, grades 1-3, of the *barangay* were the beneficiaries of our orientation about disaster preparedness,

including what to do before, during and after a typhoon.

I was moved by the children. They had witnessed the catastrophe with their own eyes, leaving scars in their hearts, but still they managed to paint a smile on their faces This proves the resiliency of true Filipinos.

Afterward, we distributed school kits to help them in their studies, since not all families can provide for their children. Lastly, 100 seedlings were planted or donated to the *barangay* to improve our environment. I'm reminded of Mollie Marti's quote, "Helping

others in need is not a responsibility of life; it is what gives meaning to life." We will raising awareness about natural calamities and extending our helping hands to the needy. All we have to do is prepare our helmet of knowledge, sword of resiliency, breastplate of benevolence and shield of protection and be ready to activate the Project S.H.I.E.L.D.!



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Favorite Things

By Khouch Ken

Although many days has gone, nothing has left my mind. While I was in US, I enjoyed many of the best things in life.

First of all: friendship. All of candidates from around Southeast Asia gave me the warmest heart in friendship. Even though, we had never known each other before, everyone acted like we were in one family, that we knew each other for many years. More than this, every activity and moment that we had together remains in my memories. Moreover, our friendship has lasted while we've been back to our home countries and we keep good connections to each other. And everyone is very free and dependable in anything we want to share.

Second: New experiences. Importantly, I understand some of the real-life US culture that before I knew only from my teacher and from the Internet or books. But after I being there, everything shows that US culture is quite different from my culture, from new food to the environment. In Cambodia, every day we always have rice to eat and some meat and vegetables. We never have hamburger, sandwich or hotdogs to eat. But, when I was in the US, I experienced many different foods.



It made me proud of myself that I could adapt to all of the foods that I had never tried before. Furthermore, I knew that US is super developed in systems such as waste management, education, security, and every single thing that is out of my expectation before I came.

Finally: my host family. I was really surprised living with my host family and my counterpart from Thailand. They gave me the warmest experience treating me as their son. While I lived with my host family, I felt myself like an American, living in a happy family.

To summarize, the best things I had while I was in US are friendship, new experiences, and my host family. Honestly, I am really thankful to the US Department of State that offered me and all Cambodian candidates the chance to be in this program and to experience many new things in our lives.

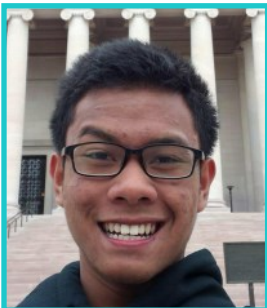
Thank you to all our guest writers From SEAYLP-2015.
Thank you to all participants from whose pages we used pictures.

Editorial Staff: Dr. Judy Ledgerwood,
Rai Nihei, Basori, Cho Mar Aye

About



Starting in 2009, the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP) is funded by the U.S. Department of State and implemented by Northern Illinois University. The program involves secondary school students and adult leaders from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It promotes mutual understanding between people of the United States and other countries and between ASEAN nations, breaks down differences that impede communication, promotes good governance, contributes to conflict prevention and management, builds respect for cultural expressions and identities, develops knowledge and skills in leadership, and develop skills for community action and improvement.

Luqmanul Hakim

from Brunei has just participated in an art installation at his school where he designed his own art installation. His experience joining SEAYLP 2015 became the major theme of his art installation.

Augusto Nguyen

from Vietnam is planning to come back to US. He got scholarship from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to study computer science and engineering. He plans to come back in August 2016 and now he can't wait for that.

Ken Khouch 'Kalipzo'

from Cambodia said that he has recently involved with a lot of community services. Besides building a library with his team, he starts working on helping other people and environment in his community.

Candy Loo

from Singapore recently won a science competition medal. She and the other SEAYLP 2015 Singapore participants got involved in a teens conference where they became presenters and shared experiences with the audience of their experience during their SEAYLP 2015 participation.

LOOK!

Who got the achievement!

Lynel Lucanas and Christine Aguilos

from Philippines went to Japan a month after SEAYLP 2015 for an exchange program. Both of them had chances to meet a lot of Japanese high school students. Christine said that the students were very kind.

Lynel and Christine also had gain new experiences during their visit since they stayed with host families who warmly welcomed them in their houses.

**Aung Kaung Myat 'Peter'**

from Myanmar is now promoted to be an advisor of a charitable organization in which he involves with after he came back from US joining SEAYLP 2015. He often serves as an invited key speaker in seminars. He further explained that

the skills he attained from SEAYLP has motivated him as a leading role to run projects. He said that SEAYLP has given him a priceless achievement since the program has converted him from a follower to a leader.

Gii NOo



from Cambodia said that he has recently worked with a group to conduct a workshop. The workshop focus on helping youth learners build their ability to become a successful learners.

Willy Dwira Yudha



from Indonesia has recently won the third place at independence day singing contest in August 2015. He was also featured in a local newspaper that reported his experience and story during the SEAYLP. He felt that now he is getting famous for that.

LOOK!

Who is being on the spot!

Anucha 'Anthony' & Natsit from SEAYLP 8, Nantanick & Vorawee from SEAYLP 7



They felt so lucky that have recently been invited to attend the 75th US exchange programs at US Embassy, Bangkok. This rare chance allowed them to meet the US ambassador for Thailand and they could also meet US university students.



want to get SEAYLP scholarship?

Northern Illinois University is committed to enrolling talented and diverse students. To further that commitment, NIU offers the NIU SEAYLP Scholarship available to select student participants who have successfully **completed** the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program at NIU, which is funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State. This scholarship is competitive. Each applicant will be evaluated against his or her peers who apply in a given year.

The scholarship is valued at approximately **\$18,900** for the 2015-2016 academic year. The scholarship is **renewable** provided the recipient remains enrolled full-time and maintains good academic standing. The scholarship may be used for either a bachelor's or master's degree but not both. The scholarship must be used within 10 years of the semester of SEAYLP participation.

The scholarship does not cover all costs associated with attending NIU. Cost for living expense, insurance, fees, and books total approximately \$17,000

for Academic Year 2015-2016, depending on housing arrangements and academic major. If you are applying at the master's level, you should seek further information on possible departmental and Graduate School funding. For more information about this exciting opportunity, contact the person listed below:

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More info: Log on http://www.niu.edu/cseas/currentinitiatives/SEAYLP/2015_Docs/SEAYLP_Scholarship_Information.pdf