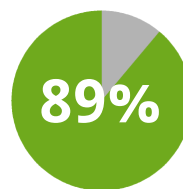


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Dance Motion USA



KIT RIPLEY



SUPPORT PLEDGED



THAILAND

It was a balmy evening as 40 teen girls from the New Life Center slipped on their sneakers and ventured over to a meeting room at Chiang Mai University. The sporty girls led the way, the only ones in the group who were confident that their lithe bodies would cooperate with the various dance moves tonight. The rest of the group, apprehensive that their own changing adolescent limbs might betray them, trailed behind.

The modern dance workshop started with breathing exercises. Well, everyone can breathe ... right? Then we moved into stretches – point your toes, swing your arms. Smiles broke out as heart rates sped up and the students realized, “I can do this!” The girls then introduced themselves and laughed as each one worked up the courage to do an expressive movement that was mirrored back to them by their friends. Some tried on conservative poses while others experimented with big, whole-body movements.

Next we broke into groups. Each group developed a series of movements based on a word – *confidence, joy, strength*. Then they practiced and performed their dance for the group. Everyone succeeded as the groups performed together, cheered on by their friends. Dancing together brings a sense of belonging. And each one’s courage grew a few sizes that day as she connected with her body in a positive way.

I am grateful to the US Department of State and the Stephen Petronio Dance Company from New York for sending professional dancers to do a dance workshop for our New Life Center residents. What an empowering experience for girls from rural tribal villages! Two days later, the girls even got to go see the dance company perform at the Old Gad Theater. What fun for the girls to see their new American friends up on stage! Events like this are a special highlight.

Thanks for your friendship and support that enable transformative events like this for young girls who would never have been able to receive these kinds of opportunities if not for the work of the New Life Center. Your investment brings hope and healing.

Love, Kit

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