



THE PHOENIX ALLIANCE
RISE FROM ASHES

News from the Nest

Summer 2024

**July * August* September*

Gangs vs. VBS

Earlier in the year we mentioned that we were working to bring a teen-oriented Vacation Bible School to the Guilford County Juvenile Detention Center. We were thrilled for the opportunity to work with all of the youth.

Unfortunately, there have been more and more gang members coming into the facility in recent months. This has made larger gatherings extremely difficult.

Greensboro is one of eight counties in North Carolina that has more than forty gangs. While talking with the teen girls in detention we have heard them reference Bloods and Crips, but others in the area include Sonos, Norteños, Latin Kings, Gangster Disciples, Satan Disciples, and more.

We've been told that gangs in the Triad are targeting younger kids to join.

While we already had a plan to separate the teens and do the program twice, this ended up not being safe enough. They aren't even able to have ten teens together right now due to violence. We are praying for wisdom and an opportunity to bring this kind of programming in the future.

Flooding Affects Thailand Home

Monsoons are a normal part of life in SE Asia. The roads in Chiang Rai are built with a curve and have giant drains on either side to quickly eradicate water build-up from rain. During our three years overseas, we had one big flood in the downtown area. The water covered a good portion of our motorbikes outside and flooded into the cafe where many of the young ladies we worked with received job training. We had gone in as a family on the night of the flooding to pull furniture up to higher ground and unplug all electrical outlets. Thankfully, by the next morning the water was gone and the clean-up didn't take more than a few hours.

Seasonal monsoon rain this August combined with Typhoon Agi led to devastating flooding and landslides. Our project leader in Chiang Rai, Kanya, was protected from the first wave of flooding in the city. Unfortunately, the second wave hit her home and she had to evacuate. Thankfully she didn't have any beneficiaries staying with her at this time. Even while sheltering at her church Kanya has taken advantage of the opportunity created by this disaster to serve those in her community and beyond. She has worked to serve hot meals and teach others about the hope we can find in Christ. We continue to be so thankful for her surrendered heart and willingness to love others well.



Becoming a Guardian Ad Litem

Kimberly Wheeler

I try to hold my breath as I step inside the dark, filthy home. Even on the front porch the stench of cigarette smoke and rotting trash had seeped out. As I stood in the tiny living room, waiting for the 16-year-old I'd come to pick up, I silently prayed.

Dear God, please give me the right words to say. Please work in her heart tonight as we spend time together. Lord, I even ask that you will work in this situation on her mom, because I know you have the power to transform her life as well.

Bailey*, the girl, emerged from the dark hallway and we stepped outside into the rainy night.

1

I'd first met Bailey a few months before after receiving her case file from my guardian ad litem supervisor. As a guardian ad litem, my responsibility is to thoroughly investigate the cases of juveniles who are abused or neglected. After the investigation, I write a court report and then advocate for the best interests of the juvenile.

"What are we doing tonight?" asked Bailey curiously as we climbed into my car.

"Well," I responded, "I thought we could get ice cream or chicken nuggets with the GOOD ranch dressing."

Her eyes lit up and a huge smile spread across her face. "You remembered my favorite!"

"Of course!" I replied, and then continued, "We can also go visit The Hope Clinic.*"

"Seriously?!" she squealed. "Yes!"

I knew she'd pick the last choice, because it was the first place she'd ever lived where she had felt so loved. When Bailey was removed from her home there were no foster placements that would take her in the county. No one wants teenagers. Instead of foster care, she had been placed in an inpatient mental health center despite not having any mental health issues. This is where I had first met her, and I was pleased to see that the staff treated her well and were fond of her.

2

While driving through the dark night, I asked Bailey how things were going at home since DSS had returned her to her mother after taking her away due to abuse. She shared about drugs and men visiting her mother; nothing new in her life. Again I wished that DSS would have found a placement for her when she could no longer stay at the mental health center. Despite my best efforts, I hadn't gotten a clear answer on why she was returned home. It didn't help that she had been assigned five different social workers in the time that she was away, and none of them seemed to know anything. Thankfully, Bailey has not reported any abuse since returning home.

We've witnessed the profound impact of volunteering in this capacity and are excited that TPA team members are now completing training as CASAs (GALs) in Indiana! Many volunteers enter this role with the intention of transforming a child's life, often unaware of how much their own lives will be enriched in the process. We believe that, alongside our work in the juvenile detention center and collaboration with local law enforcement, this initiative is an incredibly meaningful way to invest our time. It enables us to connect with vulnerable children in our community, who are always at heightened risk of being trafficked. You don't have to be working with TPA to become a guardian ad litem. If interested, let us know and we'd be happy to share how you can get involved too!

*Name and details changed to protect the child.

1. In some states the guardian ad litem, or GAL, is called a court appointed special advocate, or CASA.
2. Department of Social Services.