2019 was a year of many accomplishments for the Pearl S. Buck International offices thanks to the generous support of child sponsors and program donors. These included a cultural tour for child sponsors to the Philippines; a completed well project in Thailand; and a fun and educational trip over the summer to Pearl S. Buck International for a group of students from the Chongshi Girls’ School in China. Looking back over the year, the contributions of supporters is apparent, but it also becomes clear that there is much more that can be done looking forward into the new year.

Philippines Cultural Tour

In February, a group of child sponsors traveled to the Philippines on a Pearl S. Buck International cultural tour to experience the country’s culture and our program there. All of the participants had the opportunity to meet and visit with their sponsored children. They were able to forge a lasting bond with their sponsored child and left understanding Filipino culture.

Thailand Clean Water Project

Generous donors support many projects—one that was funded and completed this year was the Clean Water Project in Mae Ramard, Thailand. The project consisted of building three drinking water wells and six additional water wells to generate clean water for drinking and washing. The project also promotes growing non-chemically treated vegetables. Three hundred thirty-six people in the community, including 60 sponsored children, have benefited from this project.

Chinese Students Visit the U.S.

From July 26-August 7, eight students from the Chongshi Girls’ School in China came to visit Pearl S. Buck International. They spent time with their host families exploring the local sites and attractions in Bucks County. On July 29, Pearl S. Buck International was thrilled to host the group at the Pearl S. Buck National Historic Landmark, where the students got to meet staff and leadership, went on a tour of Pearl Buck’s house and estate, and enjoyed lunch in the Cultural Center. For many of these girls, this was a once-in-a-lifetime trip to visit the United States and see up close the work benefiting students in their school, meet some of the child sponsors and donors who make that work possible, and visit the American home of Pearl S. Buck International’s founder.

Orphans served by Pearl S. Buck International Vietnam continue to need your help. In Vietnam orphanages, there are many children who are mentally or physically differently-abled who have been abandoned by their parents. The overworked staff do their best with what little they have, but it is not enough. There is barely enough food—mainly rice—to go around. The orphanages get only as much money as the number of sponsored children they have—if five children are sponsored, that money must also support all the other children. The children in these orphanages will never be able to care for themselves—they will always need the support and care of others. They depend on your generous contributions just to have enough food to eat. The generosity of child sponsors and donors has changed their lives forever—but help is still needed for these most vulnerable of children. Contact Stephanie Saveriano, International Programs Director, for more information at ssaveriano@pearlsbuck.org or 215.249.0100 x142
Celebrating Winter Holidays Around The World

As we celebrate winter holidays such as Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year’s here in the United States, children in Asia celebrate their winter holidays as well.

In **China**, Chinese New Year falls on the new moon between January 21-February 20 each year. Since red is a symbol of good luck, people wear red and hang red lanterns. Children often receive small gifts in red envelopes.

In **Thailand**, they also celebrate Chinese New Year. Thai people celebrate the New Year for three to four weeks to allow for travel to visit friends and family. Students who go to school away from home use this time to travel home. Thai schools hold parties with games and performances and students exchange gifts. A number of Thai people visit their temples to make merit either on New Year’s Eve or New Year’s Day and attend meditation retreats over the holiday. Thai Buddhists make merits by offering donations to the monks, listening to sermons by the monks, giving food, and releasing birds or fish.

In **Vietnam**, the children celebrate Tet Nguyen Dan, or Tet, which translates as “the first morning of the first day of the new year” and falls on the same day as Chinese New Year. Tet is a seven-day celebration where offerings are made to the Kitchen God to bring good luck in the new year. Ancestors are honored by burning incense, and a feast is prepared to celebrate the new year. Families then go to their places of worship to pray for the new year to be prosperous.

In the **Philippines**, where the majority of the population is Catholic, Christmas is one of the biggest holidays—the Philippines celebrates the world’s longest Christmas season, with Christmas carols heard as early as September and lasting into January. The official observance is from December 6 until the Feast of the Epiphany on the first Sunday of January, but Filipinos mark September 1 as the beginning of the countdown to Christmas. In addition to throwing parties, attending church, and spending time with family, Filipino homes and buildings are also adorned with star-shaped lanterns representing the Star of Bethlehem. The Filipino people also celebrate New Year’s Day on January 1 and Chinese New Year as part of their winter festivities.

Thanks to the generous gifts of child sponsors and donors, children served by Pearl S. Buck International in these countries have a chance to celebrate and enjoy these holidays with their families and friends. Children everywhere deserve to feel loved and happy, and your kindness helps make that happen.

Thank you for your Generous Support!!